

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11
Paper 11 (Open Book)

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- Showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text.
- Ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question.
- Maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract.
- Using a well-structured and developed argument.
- Supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared for the examination; knowledge of the texts was generally good, and most knew how to structure their answers and showed evidence of planning. Most candidates made appropriate question choices, though weaker candidates sometimes chose empathic questions that enabled them to show some knowledge and understanding, but not in a reasonably appropriate voice. When such candidates attempted a passage-based or essay question, they often fared better than in the empathic questions.

There were relatively few examples of rubric infringements and of the 'final answer syndrome' where it is obvious that time has run out and the final answer is much briefer and sketchier than the previous ones. In a few cases, candidates had written very lengthy plans, crossed them out and written almost identical final drafts. This is a waste of time in examination conditions and should be discouraged.

Overall there seemed to be a general understanding of meaning / ideas in the texts and a largely conscientious response to questions (even those responding in simple narrative); but only the most successful answers engaged with the language on a deeper level. Some candidates answer a question in less than a page. Although we are looking for quality rather than quantity, perhaps candidates need to be advised that, at the level at which they are working the texts they are studying have been chosen for their depth, and that questions are designed to be searching and to elicit quite a lot more material.

In general candidates used their knowledge of the texts judiciously, constructed convincing arguments and illustrated them with apt quotations. The most successful went on to explore in detail the effects of language and imagery, and showed awareness of the authors' intentions. The best answers showed a close engagement with the texts and a real enjoyment of the books studied.

The point must be made that the words 'How' and 'In what ways' and 'explore' are specific indicators to candidates that more than narrative is required; that the main consideration is writer's method, and that the reinforcing words like 'memorably', 'vividly', 'strikingly' are also directed to consideration of the use of language. It is strongly recommended that teachers should make learners aware of the importance of these terms, and of the necessity to use them as the focus of their responses. Similarly the word 'significant' is one that candidates need to be familiar with, since it directs them to consideration of the function of a particular aspect of the text.

Lack of consideration of these words was particularly evident in some of the poetry answers. Whereas some candidates responded with enthusiasm and critical awareness to the poems selected, others seemed

somewhat at sea and had difficulty in articulating anything beyond rough 'translations' or paraphrases of the poems. Sometimes they showed an awareness that they needed to explore the effect of language, but they did this by means of general personal responses, describing how something made them feel rather than examining the way in which the poet creates an effect. It was good to see that there was less 'spotting' and no particularly 'fashionable' critical term this session, but there was a continuing tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be used instead of words which identify effects precisely.

Similarly there was a lack of really close reading of the extracts in some weaker answers to the * questions. Every session the Principal Examiner's Report comments on the necessity for candidates to give more than narrative run-throughs and to look analytically at the language used. Furthermore, the whole of the extract is important; it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for the discussion. Though there is not usually a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it and it is easy to detect a lack of knowledge of the whole text.

Empathic questions generated some of the higher-scoring responses, with several assuming a credible voice; that said, some responses in this category produced narrowly focused answers, often ignoring broader aspects of the character or their significance in the play / novel. Most candidates knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question.

In the past, it has been commented that the sense of drama is underdeveloped in responses to the plays on the papers and this continues to be a concern. For example, the best answers to questions on *Julius Caesar* showed an understanding of the visual qualities of the scene, and of the dynamics between the characters, as well as responding to changes in tone and mood. Weaker answers merely gave run-throughs of the passages. Though it is appreciated that not all candidates will be able to see plays in production, the acting of scenes in class is an important tool in developing this sense. Too often candidates refer to plays as 'books', revealing that they see them only as words on a page.

There was some poorly presented work this session, thankfully a minority, with handwriting that was very difficult to decipher. Candidates do themselves a disservice if they do not take pride in their work, and chaotic presentation often reflects a lack of coherence in the answer.

There follow notes on all the texts indicating some of the ideas that candidates might have used in their answers. They are not intended to be seen as templates for perfect answers; any relevant ideas that were supported from the text were credited. There are also indications of what candidates did particularly well and areas in which they were not quite so successful.

SECTION A: DRAMA

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

There are number of things which might be thought revealing, such as the relationship between Biff and Happy, moments of tension between Biff and his father, and the fact that Linda is pushed to the side in any discussion. Willy shows unusual scepticism, only to be followed by a rapid mood swing and the building of what are manifestly castles in the air. This was a very popular question from a very popular text, but there were a lot of one-dimensional and one-solution answers. Many answers made little attempt to consider what 'revealing' might mean, or tried to specify what it was that might be revealed and were merely paraphrases of what happens in the scene, often taken very literally (Biff is going to get a job, Willy is helping his son by telling him how to behave). There were also some generalisations about the American Dream and how it is (or, occasionally, is not) going to be achieved by the Lomans. However, even weaker answers usually demonstrated a good understanding of Linda's supportive role. Some candidates fixed on the ideas of Willy's obsession with money, or his pursuit of the American dream, and asserted that the extract 'revealed' these themes, even though we have long been aware of them. They gathered evidence in support, usually including the lines 'That is a one-million dollar idea' and 'Ask for fifteen'. Many candidates identified what the scene *shows*: Willy being rude to Linda, changing his mind and mood, giving advice to Biff; Linda being submissive; Biff making allusions to the woman in the hotel in Boston; Happy coming up with a new idea (though most candidates overlooked Happy altogether). More successful answers recognized this is a *family* scene, and that its revelatory aspects concern the dynamics of the family. It is something of a make-or-break scene: the last chance for Willy's values to be put into practice. These candidates noted the enthusiasm of everyone – even Linda and Biff, who we would expect to be more cautious. They are all carried away by the

excitement. The scene thus reveals the family to be acting as one, that their cohesion is important to them. Some candidates saw clearly that the Loman family have been here before many times, and that they have learned nothing. The scene reveals the triumph of hope over experience.

Question 2

Howard Wagner may be thought to be a totally unfeeling person who can only see in Willy a tiresome and useless employee, only interested in himself and his profits with no sense of loyalty to his employees, and still a boy in love with gadgets and the new consumer society. On the other hand he has actually indulged Willy for some time, despite the fact that he has not for a long while justified a salary, and might be now entitled to call it a day to preserve the health of his company. This question was generally done well by the candidates who attempted it. There was some variation between answers, although the ones with a positive view of Howard tended to adopt the approach that he was just doing the best for his business and thus missed much of the point of the play. The answers more critical of Howard were generally more engaged with the play's concerns. It was relatively easy to find nothing to admire, to write Howard Wagner off as a cold and narrow, and boorishly enthusiastic about gadgetry. They could note his insensitivity in recommending to Willie a luxury product costing \$150. Better answers took a more nuanced view of the interview with Willy. They argued that Howard had realized a long time ago that Willy was no longer an asset to the firm, but had put off the day when he had to do something about it. Now that Willie has brought the matter to the fore, Howard is evasive, not brutal. The tape-recorder is merely a distraction to delay the dreaded moment when the axe must fall. Though the question did not require it, candidates might have found it useful to compare him with Charley, who does not wonder where Willie can fit into his business. He does not drop him because he is not useful and there is no place for him. Instead he offers to take him on without even thinking of what he would do. He'd just give him a job 'for the hell of it.'

Question 3

Charley is likely to be thinking that Biff's priorities are wrong, that sporting prowess is not as important as he and Willy think it is, that he is likely to fail maths with far reaching consequences, and that his faint disdain for his son Bernard is likely to be very much misplaced. This question was very popular. Better answers were quite well-engaged with the situation and sometimes the details of Charley's and Bernard's characters, while weaker answers repeated what happens to Biff in the play with a few general remarks about how much better Bernard was. Many responses suffered from hindsight. In the end, Bernard made good by working hard in School; therefore candidates had Charley thinking that Biff needs to get cracking on his maths, and he looks forward to the day when accolades will fall on his own son. There was only rare mention of the fact that Charley is more worried at this moment about Biff's stealing. Good answers created a convincing voice for Charley, incorporating quite a number of his idiosyncrasies of speech.

Julius Caesar

Question 4

This is Cassius's first approach to Brutus following the initial appearance of Julius Caesar. It is a dramatic and significant moment because of Brutus's uncertainties – he is idealistic, yet feeling fear and unease regarding Caesar. Cassius's persuasiveness and his anxiety to get Brutus on side build up a powerful sense of tension. Many candidates showed a competent grasp of the importance of the scene, though they could have made more of the fact that this occurs so early in the play. There were very few answers that explored the power and emotion of Cassius's speeches, and the way in which he is able to exploit even the tiniest openings that Brutus gives.

Question 5

Areas for consideration might be Casca's report of the slave with the hand on fire, the bird of night etc., Caesar's reliance on the auguries, Artemidorus, 'Beware the Ides of March' and Caesar's ghost. This was not a particularly popular question, but those candidates who attempted it generally showed good knowledge of the text and a clear understanding of the significance of the various events.

Question 6

Cassius might be thinking about his argument with Brutus and his general demeanour, about the injustice of the accusations levelled against him, and about Portia and the manner of the revelation of her death. He will be worried about what will happen now – the battle is looming. It is a long scene, starting with the quarrel, then breaking the news of Portia's death, which contributes to the reconciliation, and then discussing the

tactics for the coming battle at Philippi - so when Cassius leaves Brutus's tent he has a lot to say. Candidates who made Cassius do no more than grieve largely denied themselves the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the play.

The Tempest

Question 7

The opening lines address a range of superhuman agencies which Prospero has enlisted to help in his exercise of magical power. The extent of that power makes its renunciation even more telling, and may be seen by some candidates as changing their perception of Prospero's character. His subsequent comments to the assembled royal group as they gradually regain their senses have the effect of a judicial summing up. Candidates might have commented on the visual aspect of the scene, with the spectacle of the initially transfixed characters changing into wakefulness. The whole extract provides a sense of an ending in which loose ends are tied up and order is restored. The question explicitly calls for examination of the language. This was marginally more popular than the essay question on the play. Many answers were disappointing, providing little more than a few generalisations about how powerful Prospero is. A few answers noticed the opening focus on his power over the natural world, and a very few commented on the change from magic powers to the much greater human power of forgiveness.

Question 8

Miranda and Ferdinand fall in love at first sight. Her innocence and inexperience make her susceptible to Ferdinand, but his feelings for her are presented as pure and sincere. The conversation between the two in Act 3 Scene 1 may prove a good source of material for exploring the initial establishment of this relationship. Prospero's interventions in the course of the relationship may also be considered as a way of exploring the 'moving' aspect of the question. Candidates might have contrasted the innocence of their relationship with the behaviour of other characters in the play. At best, most answers provided a summary of how Miranda and Ferdinand met and subsequently behaved in the play, with a few comments about their personal characteristics. Some very good answers were able to investigate how the relationship is both moving in itself and a crucial part of the play in terms of theme and concerns, beyond its significance for the plot.

Question 9

Antonio is an inveterate conspirator with an eye to the main chance. Although he may well be exasperated at the frustration of this plan, he will not abandon his ambitions. He may well have some comment to make about Sebastian and his complicity in the plan, and he may well be thinking of the advantage that could accrue to him if the plan comes to effect. Very few examples of responses to this question were seen.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

The audience may well be intrigued by what is to happen to the romance of Jack and Gwendolen given what passes between them and what will ensue from Gwendolen being given Jack's country address, Algernon's writing down the address on his shirt cuff, and his subsequent remarks to Lane and his attitude to Jack. Candidates wondered how Jack would resolve the problem of his real name, after Gwendolen reveals that she is hopelessly enamoured by the name of Ernest, or how they will overcome Lady Bracknell's objections. Then Jack tells Gwendolen his address, and Algernon smiles to himself, writes the address on his shirt cuff, and picks up the handy Bradshaw. Clearly he is up to something, and we wonder what. A lot of candidates tended to ignore the actual question, and concentrate instead on summarising what happened in the extract. A pity, as most had a working understanding of the context / implications of what was happening. Very few responded to Algernon's 'smiling to himself' or his later 'laughing' and final 'smiles'. A few answers showed good understanding of the ironic and satirical elements of the scene, and analysed Algernon's eavesdropping and plans in the light of his character.

Question 11

Some of the things which make Lady Bracknell so memorably amusing are her trenchant mode of address, her outrageous views and the fear she creates, her assumption that everyone will do as she demands since she is older than most and wiser than all, and her ultimate failure to organise anyone to do anything which she expects. The few candidates who attempted this question produced answers which commented on a limited range of aspects of Lady Bracknell's character and role in the play, but were generally unable to

respond to the cue words 'memorably amusing'. One very good one answer looked not only at the character's dialogue in detail and depth, but also considered her part in Wilde's satirical purpose, and the irony of her position by the gap between her own ideas of her importance and her actual powers in the play.

Question 12

Lane appears to feel infinitely superior to his supposed master, rather like Jeeves of a later generation. He may well be thinking that little good can come of it, about the disaster which he implies was his own attempt at matrimony, pessimistically about a household run by young Cecily, and grimly about the way his perks in the way of good champagne are likely to end.

SECTION B: POETRY

There are many ways of interpreting a poem; there follow a few ideas that the poems in question might suggest. Any ideas that could be supported were credited, and answers which explored the imagery and show sensitivity to the music of the poetry gained high reward.

Alfred Lord Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

Question 13

The loneliness of Mariana's life is conveyed by the description of the isolation of the moated grange ('the level waste') and the black water of the moat, the wind and the ghostliness of the house, and the sense of past occupants. The use of repetition in the refrain and the way in which the rhyme scheme places emphasis on particular words build to a crescendo of despair.

Question 14

The intensity of Tennyson's grief at Hallam's death and its different stages convey the strength of the friendship. He idealises Hallam and the difficulty in living without him, and it takes a great deal of time for him to move on. The imagery conveys the different phases and answers needed to focus on 'movingly', and to move beyond explanation and description to engage with the feeling of the poem selected.

Question 15

The nature of the pain and suffering in either poem needed to be explored – the speaker's grief and anguish at the death of Maud, the loneliness and domination by the curse in *the Lady of Shalott* – and the way in which the setting reinforces the feelings of the characters. The language and imagery are central: the gothic image of being buried alive in *Maud*, and the contrast between the sterility of the castle in *The Lady of Shalott* and the vibrancy and colour of what lies outside it. The way in which the rhyme and rhythm reinforce the feelings also needed comment.

Songs Of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

The emphasis in the question is on a sense of menace, and candidates needed to shape their comments to address this. The poem is full of rich imagery, and the diction can be explored and commented on, e.g., 'tigering', 'malevolent', 'horror'. Candidates might have commented on the horrific image of the cannibalism of pike, and / or the sense of fear aroused in the poet by the night-fishing experience, and also on the repeated numerical references to size, weight, time. It is a long poem and they were not expected to be exhaustive in their answers. This question was generally handled more successfully than the other poetry questions, and there were some very analytical and responsive answers. Even the weakest answers tended to have a reasonable understanding of the viciousness of the fish.

Question 17

In *The City Planners* the activities of the planners seem to attempt to achieve a permanence and stability to life which the poet appears to suggest is ultimately futile. Candidates needed to look closely at details such as the way the diction in the first part of the poem contrasts with that later on, and that diction relating to order and rationality contrasts with that relating to disorder and chaos (e.g. 'sanities', 'pedantic', 'rational' as opposed to 'hysteria', 'insane', 'panic'). In *The Planners* the language of the poem connotes order and conformity, but the poet's comments on nature ('the sea', 'the skies') and time ('history', 'fossils') suggest a

hostile feeling about city life. This was also a very popular question, with most of the answers focusing on Boey Kim Cheng rather than the Atwood, and quite a few mistakenly writing about both. The answers were the less diverse, with candidates able to pick out some details to support an account of the poet's general distaste for suburban life and 'the government'. The responses to *The Planners* were more varied, with some really well-considered answers which thoroughly engaged with both the ideas in the poem and their poetic expression. There were, inevitably, also some answers which took the poem at face value as a rousing endorsement of the success of modern urban planning. The answers in between were variable in their ability to explore language and investigate attitudes, the weaker ones hampered by an inability to read beyond the city–nature opposition in the first stanza. Better answers, of course, recognized the irony, the sarcasm and scorn in both poems. A few very good answers saw that the attitudes went deeper than mere disapproval. Boey Kim Cheng has in effect given up. The planners are unstoppable, and have conquered the sky, the sea, even history. They have erased everything, even memory. The poem is despairing. Margaret Atwood, by contrast, has hope. There is mischievous glee in her voice as she contemplates the houses subsiding and collapsing, and nature reclaiming its own.

Question 18

The question is specifically about the sounds of the words: rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, repetition, sibilance, consonance, assonance, but more than identification of poetic devices was required; comments needed to be linked to the *effects* the words create. This was not such a popular question and there was a marked lack of response to the power of the words. The Hopkins tended to be the more successful, though comments did not go much beyond the pointing out of alliteration.

SECTION C: PROSE

Wuthering Heights

Question 19

As ever with *Isabella* there is a mixture of possible responses. Pity might be invoked by her appearance, and by her self-evident desperation which has led her to drastic action. However, the reader may well also see evidence of the old *Isabella* in her self-centredness, and her assumption of her being a lady and therefore to be cosseted. There were some good answers on this question, all of which responded productively to *Isabella* as a character and picked out relevant details from the narrative. It was rare, however, to see any consideration of the effect of *Nelly* as narrator.

Question 20

Brontë makes *Catherine Earnshaw* into a character who is fated to live constantly on the edge. On a mundane level she can appear shockingly wilful and capricious, yet she is deeply passionate; grey is not a colour she would recognise. She with *Heathcliff* is a personification of elemental forces which are beyond rational explanation, and that is so even after her death. Good answers were characterised by a strong personal response and by reference to appropriate moments in the novel.

Question 21

Heathcliff is in despair and no longer interested in living. His thoughts are likely to be centred on the dead *Catherine* and how he desperately hopes to join her in some other world. Also he might be looking back on his life, perhaps realising that the success of his revenge has actually brought him no satisfaction. He might also recognise the irony of his actions having brought the younger *Catherine* and *Hareton* together, and perhaps see in their love the ultimate riposte to his harsh philosophy. This was the most popular of the three questions on this text. The weakest answers simply lifted dialogue *verbatim* from *Heathcliff's* last speech to *Nelly*. Others summarised *Heathcliff's* life and ascribed most improbable reactions to him (such as remorse, or delight in the romance between *Catherine* and *Hareton*), but there were some strong and distinctive voices in the best answers.

Nervous Conditions

This was not a popular text on this component and so it is difficult to make comments about candidates' performance.

Question 22

Candidates might have responded to Lucia's pragmatic realism - she despises Takesure but accepts that she can satisfy some of her needs. The narrator's attempts to influence Lucia's behaviour show her concern and her sense of morality. Takesure's singed hair helps to make this an amusing spectacle. The way in which Jeremiah and Takesure accept the credit for the women's repairs to the roof could be seen as both comic and revelatory about both individual characters, and the relative status of men and women in this culture. The need to repair the roof reveals the backbreaking and seemingly unending toil which constitutes life at the homestead.

Question 23

Babamukuru is the family benefactor, the bright boy made good through his own efforts and he is perceived as such by the family, and revered on his return to the homestead. He is, even at this stage, a little self-important and proud of his own achievements. There is much to admire in his generous treatment of his extended family - the provision of food and much else - and he assumes a patriarchal role in, for example, the *dare* concerning Takesure and Lucia. His word is law and he continues to be a figure of authority. However, he is rigid. Some candidates expressed outrage at his treatment of Nyasha, or his beating of Tambudzai after she refuses to attend her parents' wedding - and of his treatment of Maiguru.

Question 24

Maiguru has reached breaking point. Affairs are brought to a head by Babmukuru's punishment of Tambu for refusing to attend her parents' wedding, but this has unleashed a range of other feelings. She may well be feeling a sense that she has wasted her own potential by submitting to the traditional role of wife and mother. She may be feeling unreasonable guilt about the death of Nhamo while he was in her care (she refers to this in the argument with her husband). She is tired of the excessive and thankless workload she has to endure for the sake of her husband's family. She may well be considering her options for the future without having fully accepted her limited room for manoeuvre, but she will not be as fanciful as her daughter and niece.

Fasting, Feasting

Question 25

Mrs Patton's mood is almost manic ('wild' eyes). Melanie is stuffing mouthfuls of peanuts and tearful. Mr Patton is disappointed, angry at the absence of the family, and attempting joviality. Mrs Patton attempts to placate him. Key to the question is Arun's viewpoint and his impressions of the situation. The details of the writing are important e.g. the way in which Mr Patton is described like a baby 'his lower lip is moist' etc., the religious imagery, the ceremony of the barbeque. A recognition of the irony in the writing characterised the best answers.

Question 26

Candidates might have considered whether the power of the family is more obvious in India and the rules clearer. Male dominance in India appears to lead to extremes like Uma's treatment by Harish, and Anamika's tragic life. There seem to be more career opportunities in the USA but they are not always exploited. There is more expectation of domesticity in India. Candidates might well have reached the conclusion that women are oppressed to some extent in both societies but in different ways. There were a lot of one-solution responses. Usually the solution ran along the lines that women in India are cast into a subservient position, where they must obey and indulge their men-folk. They have no freedom; their education is limited, and they must marry into a family chosen by their parents. In America, on the other hand, things, though not perfect, are a lot better. But the problem is more complex. Desai sets most of the novel in India, so it is Indian women we meet, most often, and most intimately. Uma perhaps fits the stereotypes (though she has her moments of defiance), but Mama and Aruna, very much mother and daughter, seem to have engineered the running of their houses to their own advantage. When they want something, they get it. And Harish's ghastly mother certainly does not fit the stereotype. In America there are fewer women with whom to make a contrast, but Mrs Patton, despite her skimpy sunbathing, is not as free as some candidates would believe, and Melanie is just, well, very sad. In their assumption of conventional wisdom, that America is advanced and India backward, candidates missed the main difference, obvious from a little reflection on the novel. It is that in India the women are cared for. Uma is confined, fettered, but Mamapapa do not neglect her. Though misguided, they do in a strange way concern themselves for her welfare. In America, by contrast, the children forage for themselves in the refrigerator, and nobody even realises that Melanie is ill.

Question 27

Uma is on the train. She has had a terrible experience with her ghastly mother-in-law; but now again, in relief of being rescued, Papa is humiliating her further by regaling all the passengers with what happened, and boasting about his successful intervention thanks to his legal training. And what about when they get home? It will be far worse than being brought back from School by Sister Theresa. Uma has a great deal on her mind. As she hides her face in her sari her thoughts will likely be crowded, confused. Good answers picked all this up. She will be thinking about her reflections on her marriage and the process leading to it, Harish, his family and their treatment of her, MamaPapa and particularly Papa, and the future. Her feelings on returning home may be relief only, or perhaps a sense of failure.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

This was not a popular text on this component and so it is difficult to make comments about candidates' performance.

Question 28

There are a number of reasons which make this such an amusing moment: the would be bride is delivered like a dusty parcel, for Sampath the difference between the fantasy bride and the reality makes him sick and he refuses to come down from the tree, then the would be bride is lifted into the tree only to fall ignominiously to ground after making the slightest of physical contacts with a horrified Sampath.

Question 29

How the character and his features are thought to be *particularly* entertaining was the focus of the task, and engagement with the ways in which Desai's writing makes the character so amusing.

Question 30

Sampath has had his epiphany with the guava. He is likely to be thinking that at that moment he saw the possible wonders of the natural world around him, that what is judged important in the everyday world is pointless, that he could not endure any longer the constrictions of life in Shahkot, and that he could escape all this by simply leaving home.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

Striking features of the extract are the hard drinking and smoking, the overt adultery going on between Tom and Myrtle, the artificiality of Catherine and the McKees, and the complete triviality of the conversation. The characters are representative of a particularly unattractive echelon of society; they try to be on a level with Tom but succeed only in appearing rather unpleasant and pathetic. Key to a good answer was the recognition that the impressions of them are all filtered through Nick's viewpoint. The very strong answers were terrifically attentive both to the nuances of Nick's descriptions and the (literal and metaphorical) angle from which he observes the companions. Many candidates did see something of the big picture; the tawdriness, the affected behaviour, the pretensions. 'Tacky' was a word frequently used. Better answers started here, mentioned the over-furnished room and the trophy dog, and then fitted the various characters appropriately into the picture. Catherine's artificiality was noticed and shrewdly analysed by almost everyone. Weaker answers failed to realise or know that Tom's companions were wannabes rather than rich people, and some seemed to have only a hazy idea of what was actually happening in the scene or were primarily focused on being censorious about the drinking, smoking and adultery. The weakest answers offered discourses on the American dream, how it was the dream of everyone, and that here everyone was shown to be reaching for their slice.

Question 32

Candidates might have considered the early days of the relationship, Gatsby's departure for the army, and Daisy's somewhat precipitate marriage to Tom. They might then have considered Gatsby's obsession with her, her reactions on his return, and finally her response to the accusations that he is a bootlegger. Some candidates wrote about whether Daisy had ever really loved Gatsby or was just pretending so that she could get his money. Some also considered whether she was just in love with her own wonderful self. The few

who did consider whether Daisy had ever in fact also loved Tom (the crucial implication of which is that she did not). Candidates who wrote very detailed and thoughtful accounts of how this question is crucial to the plot and an understanding of the novel. It was easier to make the case against, but some candidates argued for, and with some evidence they could gain a reasonable mark. Predictably, a nuanced view was likely to score highly. A surprisingly large number of candidates made no mention of Daisy letting Gatsby take the blame for the death of Myrtle (often described as 'murder'), or the Buchanan's precipitate flight immediately after Gatsby's murder and before the funeral.

Question 33

Mr Gatz will be thinking about how he heard of the death, his journey to the house, and his feelings on seeing it. He will also be thinking about his relationship with his son and the funeral. Though Mr Gatz only appears briefly, he has an idiosyncratic way of speaking and his pride in his son is very evident. He appears to bear no malice for being neglected and is completely in sympathy with Gatsby's ambitions. This was attempted by quite a few candidates, some of whom went astray asserting that Mr Gatz knew all about Daisy (extremely unlikely). Safer answers steered a more cautious course of asserting grief and confusion, although some of these also seemed convinced that Gatsby had not seen his father since he left home (explicitly contradicted by the text). Better answers showed his sympathy with Gatsby's desire for greatness and confusion about his death, and one particularly good one captured his voice very well indeed. This should not have been a difficult question, as the novel gives several promising leads, with Mr Gatz drawn quite clearly. He also possesses a distinctive voice: he is a solemn old man, helpless and dismayed; his grief is mixed with awed pride; he looks in vain for the crowds of mourners; he trembles; he always addresses Nick as Mr Carraway; and of his son he says 'Jimmy' and 'my boy'.

from *Stories Of Ourselves*

Question 34

The context was not strictly required but helpful, in that it describes the 'unpleasantly strange impression that the horse had made on him' and the horrible weather conditions. What makes the moment so disturbing is the impressions of the horse – it seems sinister, almost supernatural and he asks himself if it is clairvoyant - the darkness and wetness of the day, and the general hostility of the environment and the man's fear. The weakest answers asserted that the man was mad and the horse imaginary, which left little to be analysed in the passage; better answers managed to respond to pathetic fallacy and the almost cinematic quality of the feeling of 'when and where will it strike'.

Question 35

Candidates might have explored the ambiguity of Harold's feelings about his father in *The Fly in the Ointment*, and the old man's disappointment in Harold. In *The Custody of the Pumpkin* the 'fluffiness' of Lord Emsworth and Freddie's attempts to outwit him are central. This was another popular question, and most of the candidates who answered it chose the Pritchett. The weaker answers were predictably narrative, but there were many better and some good answers, which considered the symbolism of the fly, the abrupt changes in the old man's demeanour, and sometimes even the subtleties of the narrative voice. Most candidates had a basic understanding of the two characters, and could appreciate something of the dynamics between them. Weaker candidates saw a cold, hard, calculating father, and a more reasonable son who was in danger of become putty in his father's hands. Like Willy Loman the father was 'obsessed by money', and after that there was not much to say. Better candidates took a more nuanced view, seeing the father's criticisms as much defence as attack. Surprisingly few mentioned the incident of father climbing onto the table and then needing help to get down. (*Lean on me*). Some felt they ought to bring in the fly, but could not quite see its significance. The answers on Wodehouse were not as accomplished, some of them seeming not to know the story very well at all, and the better ones not getting much beyond narrative summary with a little understanding of how this might be either comic or satirical. Most candidates handled Lord Emsworth's feelings for his son with some competence, but then they assumed they had finished, and said nothing at all about the Hon Freddie's view of his father. The letter, surely so illustrative, was thus not mentioned at all.

Question 36

Mike will be thinking about T and his plan for Old Misery's house, escaping parental control, the destruction - especially the bits that he has been responsible for - and Mr Thomas and the role of look-out. This question was often done poorly for the reason that Mike was confused with another character (usually Blackie). Other answers correctly identified Mike but were confused about his attitude to the destruction, assuming that his



age meant that he would be less committed and / or more understanding about the significance of the destruction. There were some reasonable answers drawing on his desire to fit in, and a plausible sense of glee at how famous and successful his gang would be when everyone else heard about what they had

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12
Paper 12 (Open Books)

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- Showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text.
- Ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question.
- Maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract.
- Using a well-structured and developed argument.
- Supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared for the examination; knowledge of the texts was generally good, and most knew how to structure their answers and showed evidence of planning. Most candidates made appropriate question choices, though weaker candidates sometimes chose empathic questions that enabled them to show some knowledge and understanding, but not in a reasonably appropriate voice. When such candidates attempted a passage-based or essay question, they often fared better than in the empathic questions.

There were relatively few examples of rubric infringements and of the 'final answer syndrome', where it is obvious that time has run out and the final answer is much briefer and sketchier than the previous ones. In a few cases, candidates had written very lengthy plans, crossed them out and written almost identical final drafts. This is a waste of time in examination conditions and should be discouraged.

Overall there seemed to be a general understanding of meaning / ideas in the texts and a largely conscientious response to questions (even those responding in simple narrative); but only the most successful answers engaged with the language on a deeper level.

In general candidates used their knowledge of the texts judiciously, constructed convincing arguments, and illustrated them with apt quotations. The most successful went on to explore in detail the effects of language and imagery, and showed awareness of the authors' intentions. The best answers showed a close engagement with the texts and a real enjoyment of the books studied.

The point must be made that the words 'How' and 'In what ways' and 'explore' are specific indicators to candidates that more than narrative is required; that the main consideration is writer's method, and that the reinforcing words like 'memorably', 'vividly', 'strikingly' are also directed to consideration of the use of language. It is strongly recommended that teachers should make learners aware of the importance of these terms, and of the necessity to use them as the focus of their responses. Similarly the word 'significant' is one that candidates need to be familiar with, since it directs them to consideration of the function of a particular aspect of the text.

Lack of consideration of these words was particularly evident in some of the poetry answers. Whereas some candidates responded with enthusiasm and critical awareness to the poems selected, others seemed somewhat at sea and had difficulty in articulating anything beyond rough 'translations' or paraphrases of the poems. Sometimes they showed an awareness that they needed to explore the effect of language, but they did this by means of general personal responses such as describing how watching a sunrise in the early

morning made them feel, rather than by examining the way in which Wordsworth conveys this through words and imagery in *on Westminster Bridge*. It was good to see that there was less 'spotting' and no particularly 'fashionable' critical term this session, but there was a continuing tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be used instead of words which identify effects precisely.

Similarly there was a lack of really close reading of the extracts in some weaker answers to the * questions. Every session the Principal Examiner's Report comments on the necessity for candidates to give more than narrative run-throughs and to look analytically at the language used. Furthermore, the whole of the extract is important; it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for the discussion. Though there is not usually a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it, and it is easy to detect a lack of knowledge of the whole text.

Empathic questions generated some of the higher-scoring responses, with several assuming a credible voice; that said, some responses in this category produced narrowly focused answers, often ignoring broader aspects of the character or their significance in the play / novel. Most candidates knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question.

In the past, it has been commented that the sense of drama is underdeveloped in responses to the plays on the papers and this continues to be a concern. For example, the best answers to questions on *Julius Caesar* showed an understanding of the visual qualities of the scene, and of the dynamics between the characters, as well as responding to changes in tone and mood. Weaker answers merely gave run-throughs of the passages.

Though it is appreciated that not all candidates will be able to see plays in production, the acting of scenes in class is an important tool in developing this sense. Too often candidates refer to plays as 'books', revealing that they see them only as words on a page.

There was some poorly presented work this session, thankfully a minority, with handwriting that was very difficult to decipher. Candidates do themselves a disservice if they do not take pride in their work, and chaotic presentation often reflects a lack of coherence in the answer.

There follow notes on all the texts indicating some of the ideas that candidates might have used in their answers. They are not intended to be seen as templates for perfect answers; any relevant ideas that were supported from the text were credited. There are also indications of what candidates did particularly well and areas in which they were not quite so successful.

SECTION A: DRAMA

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

This was a very popular text and question. In the passage Happy is clearly at his most unpleasant. He is a blatant liar in everything he says, relishes his capacity to make people believe his lies, sees women as pitiable objects to be seduced and then argues that that is the reason why he has never married, without thinking that there is a possibility that some women understand him all too well. The question invited a strong personal response and many candidates offered very critical opinions, particularly about his treatment of Miss Forsythe as a 'piece of meat' whom he is quite ready to pass over to his brother. Some were able to find it in their hearts to sympathise with him, seeing his behaviour as another form of attention-seeking because he has always been made to feel inferior to his brother. The most able candidates linked Happy's behaviour back to Willy's own values, his unfaithfulness, and his shallow appreciation of the world. Weaker answers tended to see only the surface meaning of the passage and thought he was quite charming in his flirtatiousness. Knowledge of context was clearly an advantage.

Question 2

There was a wide range of choice for this question but the key point was the dramatic effect of the time shifts and, though most candidates were able to identify apt instances, they often merely narrated them rather than focusing on the way in which the past illuminates the present. The most able showed that they understood the significance of these moments to explore Willy's past, to raise tension, to provoke pathos for Willy, and to show the extent of his mental disintegration.

Question 3

Biff is likely to be thinking about his present unsatisfactory life, and his lack of vision for the future. His confidence about the interview with Bill Oliver will be offset by his uncertainty as to whether he really was the life of a businessman. Willy's expectations of him may provoke feelings of disgust. Most candidates knew the context and understood Biff's feelings very well. There were some very competent assumptions of his voice.

Julius Caesar

Question 4

The key words in the question were 'a dramatic and significant moment in the play', so more than a mere run-through of the extract was required. Good answers commented on the fickleness and potential violence of the plebeians, who are easily won over by Brutus, on Brutus's self-justification and the manner of it, and on the entry of Antony and the implications of leaving Antony alone with the plebeians. The best answers explored Brutus's oratory in detail, showing what it reveals of his character. Candidates often gave a narrative response, with considerable re-telling of events and explaining of meaning, and little awareness of context. Many candidates understood the skills of Brutus as an orator and explored his language with confidence. They also understood the political sensitivity of the situation and the fickleness of the crowd. Many also made the point that allowing Mark Anthony to speak was a mistake, and that that this made the extract even more significant since it was the beginning of Brutus's downfall. There was some confusion about whether or not Brutus had deliberately killed Caesar for his own ends or whether he had been tricked. Some candidates suggested that Brutus was deliberately lying to the crowd as he had killed Caesar in order to gain the crown himself.

Question 5

'To what extent' was a key consideration in examining sympathy for Cassius, and candidates tended to begin by feeling contempt for him but came to feel more sympathy as the play progresses. Their perceptions of his character covered his jealousy of Caesar, his flattery of Brutus, without whom he is unable to raise support, and on the other hand his success as a soldier, generally respected except by Caesar and Antony. Issues under consideration were his part in the conspiracy, his treatment by Brutus before Philippi, and the manner of his death. Some candidates did not engage with Cassius on a human level and merely saw him as a pantomime villain. Many acknowledged that his character had changed and that there was more sympathy with him towards the end of the play, but they were unable to truly communicate how and why.

Question 6

There were some very competent assumptions of the character of Brutus, showing his appreciation of the nobility and courage of his wife, and of the strength of their bond. They tended to focus on his sense of honour and his fear of the outcome of the conspiracy. Many smoothly integrated echoes of the text into their answers. Weaker answers tended to pour out plenty of emotion but did not refer in detail to what has happened in the meeting with the conspirators.

The Tempest

Question 7

The extract (Act III Scene ii) develops the blossoming attempt by Caliban to persuade his fellow-drinkers to plot against and overthrow Prospero, and is comic in the way in which the drunken Stephano and Trinculo attempt to be effective. Caliban's descriptions of Prospero and Miranda are compelling; he obviously has some understanding of the sources of Prospero's power. The 'isle is full of noises' speech reveals his character as more complex than it might have at first appeared. The way that the conspirators are led on by Ariel's music contributes to the dramatic power of the scene, as Ariel is going to tell Prospero of their plans. The key words were 'dramatic' and 'amusing', and successful answers focused sharply on them and developed arguments. Many candidates understood the humour in it; that there was comic relief after a previously tense scene, and that Caliban was comic and foolish. Unfortunately they did not engage with the language to any great extent, and there was little reference to the brutality of Caliban's threats.

Question 8

Central points were Caliban's truculent and resentful reaction to Prospero's physical punishments, the fact that he regards himself as having been robbed of his birthright by Prospero. Candidates might also have referred to his attempts to involve others in his plots against Prospero's power. In fact there were some excellent answers which confidently debated the previously kind treatment of Prospero and his cruel treatment of Caliban. Many saw the injustice of what had happened and discussed how Shakespeare created this sense of injustice. Those who referred closely and in detail to Caliban's language achieved high marks, though some weaker candidate referred only to the extract for **Question 7** and thus limited their achievement significantly. A number of candidates wrote about *their feelings about Caliban*, rather than Caliban's feelings. Many simply described Caliban's feelings or responded to the character in a very basic way.

Question 9

Miranda has come a long way emotionally in a very short time. She has met and fallen in love with the third man she has ever seen. She has learned a great deal about her background and early history in her conversation with her father. Her love for Ferdinand seems all consuming as she declares she would also happily be his servant. She is likely to be glad and relieved that her prospective father-in-law is as happy to bless the union as her own father, and she is likely to show some bewilderment at the pace of events. Many candidates embarked on this task enthusiastically but success was dependent on achieving the compassionate serenity of her voice, often through the integration of some of her actual words.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

This text was not widely studied, but those who offered it responded very enthusiastically to it and there were some very good answers. The opening of the play immediately introduces the audience to the witty banter which is common to most of the play's characters - characters who set about turning the accepted norms upside down - and the most successful answers explored this idea of reversal and inversion with gusto. They also commented on the conflict between the characters and the plot development which is being set up. There were several candidates who thought Lane was a woman. A number of broadly narrative responses went a good way beyond the given extract in discussing the opening of the play.

Question 11

Cecily is a lively girl, who has been isolated in the country from the much more exciting world of London. Miss Prism is a stern, earnest and humourless spinster with no contact to a girl's world and aspirations. She behaves rather like a gaoler and so at the first opportunity Cecily rebels. The question is why this is so funny, and unless answers were able to discuss the dialogue in some detail and to move beyond narrative they were unlikely to be successful. Several responses focused principally or even exclusively on Miss Prism's relationship with Dr Chasuble, ignoring Cecily almost totally.

Question 12

Algernon 'loves scrapes'. He is likely to be thinking that here is the ideal opportunity for a scrape. He has been intrigued for a long time by the mysteries surrounding his friend's life, and now is the opportunity to solve the mystery and to have some fun at Jack's expense. There were some extremely convincing and lively assumptions of the character of Algernon; many candidates appeared to find it easy to get into his voice. Most managed to say something that showed some level of understanding / knowledge of Algernon's character. The best captured his mischievous scheming, whilst the weaker ones were overly plot-based.

SECTION B: POETRY

There are many ways of interpreting a poem, and any ideas that could be supported were credited. Answers which explored the imagery and show sensitivity to the music of the poetry were very successful, but those that merely explained or narrated the content of the poem rarely achieved a mark higher than Band 5.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

This text was only offered by a few Centres, but candidates seemed to enjoy the poems, probably because of their strong narrative elements and their musical quality.

Question 13

The key word in the questions was 'admire', and so straightforward character sketches did not attract high marks. Ulysses has prepared for the final journey; he has put his house in order with Telemachus and seems to be content to hand over the reins of power to his son. This may be seen as courageous and sensible or as defeatist. He is encouraging his old friends and compatriots to make the most of their last days with him, and is courageous in refusing to succumb to old age. He insists on pressing onwards into the unknown, though he accepts the inevitability of death. Good answers responded well to the tone of the poem and explored the imagery in some detail. Weaker answers did not seem to fully understand the character or Tennyson's purpose.

Question 14

Elements for consideration were the curse, the entrapment and loneliness of the Lady, her willingness to sacrifice herself for love, Sir Lancelot, and the fantasy background (the mediaeval castle, knights in armour). Good answers went beyond narrative, and considered the way the language and imagery and the form of the poem all contribute to the effect. Weak answers merely told the story.

Question 15

This is the final section of the poem and has a sense of completion about it. The mood has changed from grief and despair to one of hope and optimism, though there are still tinges of sadness. The imagery is full of light and colour, and there is a sense of new life in nature which is reflected in the poet ('in my breast Spring wakens too'). The strong rhymes give a sense of uplift. The discriminator was the strength of response to 'moving', and the details in which the language was explored, not merely explained.

Songs Of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

This question was perhaps the most popular on the whole paper. Answers ranged across all levels, but almost all understood the poem and the poet's feelings about what bliss it was to be alive, and attempted to communicate this very positively. It was, however, an easy poem to 'parrot', and many answers were deceptive, in that they seemed good but actually consisted only of choosing a great many lines and paraphrasing what they said. There were innumerable blue skies and gentle clouds. 'Calm' and 'wonder' appeared over-frequently, without a clear understanding of *how* they had been created. Answers therefore tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. Candidates might have commented on the lack of activity in the poem and identified specific features of the diction of the poem which support this, e.g. 'silent', 'smokeless', 'calm', 'still'. They might have commented on the use of repetition, e.g. of 'Never', on the contrast between human inactivity and the ongoing processes of nature, and on the rhythm and form of the sonnet, and how it contributes to the creation of this sense of calm and wonder. However not many answers showed a secure understanding of what a sonnet is. There was a good deal of misreading of the line referring to 'valley, rock, or hill', which many seemed to think meant that these natural features existed in the middle of London. The main problem was a lack of analysis of the words. Many candidates took a line by line approach, offering a sort of paraphrase or explanation and even sometimes inventing a scenario, for example, "Earth has not anything to show more fair" The world is full of beautiful gardens but Wordsworth does not find any of them as appealing as to his view which shows that he was in awe.' (sic.). There was, however, feature-spotting, e.g. 'there is personification', but without any development. There was some confusion about when the poem was written and suggestions that it was calm because there were no cars, and some candidates seemed not to realise that the poem is about London.

Question 17

Key words in this question were 'the power of nature'. In *Hunting Snake* candidates might have commented on the contrast between the language used to describe the humans out for a gentle walk and the more intense language to describe the appearance and activity of the snake, and on the effect of the snake on them. *Pike* apparently offered more explicit references to power because of the violence and malevolence of the creature, and it produced some extremely good answers. Candidates seemed to engage powerfully with the power of nature in the two animals, with strong descriptions of movement and, of course, grins and jaws. Answers were focused and used language creatively to communicate feelings, candidates often writing at length. Weaker answers showed a working knowledge of the chosen poem but they did not relate it to the 'power' of nature, instead discussing in general terms what it told them about nature.

Question 18

The sustained use of simile by Rossetti and the ways in which Hopkins uses compound words to create images of pined beauty were central here. It was a fairly open question, but answers required more than mere listing of appropriate words and images. Analysis was the key to success and focus on the effects created on tone and mood. A number of otherwise competent candidates provided unnecessary biographical details for both poets and, while picking up one or two marks for knowledge, lost focus on the poems and the marks they might have gained by exploring the language more closely.

SECTION C: PROSE

Wuthering Heights

This text was offered by only a few Centres, so comments are by necessity limited.

Question 19

A number of things might be thought to point to a changed relationship. Heathcliff and Cathy no longer seem to value and share the same things. Catherine wants civilised conversation which Heathcliff cannot provide. He is a farm labourer, she is a lady, and therefore much drawn to Edgar Linton's world as is made clear through the passage. Almost all candidates understood Heathcliff's feelings and the changes in Catherine, but there were many intrusive paragraphs about what happened elsewhere in the novel.

Question 20

The key word in this question is 'compelling'. Heathcliff is larger than life in everything. He is a man of huge energy, consuming passions, violent rages and the capacity for vengeance and at times titanic imagination. Although there were some valiant efforts to engage with 'compelling', engaging with two sides of Heathcliff's character, there were whole chunks of writing describing his childhood and early years.

Question 21

Edgar Linton is besotted, as Nelly Dean observes. He will be thinking about the vibrant personality of this young woman who lives with an intensity which he finds overwhelming, disconcerting, but utterly beguiling. He might also be thinking with self-satisfaction about how he can offer Catherine the life of a lady, and how he is just the man to 'civilise' further this still rather wild creature. Most candidates knew the context of the question, but quite a few did not understand Edgar's state of mind, not quite capturing his mixed feelings about what had happened. The best answers picked this up and explored it well.

Nervous Conditions

This was a very popular text and candidates had clearly derived a good deal of enjoyment from it.

Question 22

Lucia has just overheard herself accused of witchcraft by Takesure at the *dare*, and her impulsive and passionate personality mean that she cannot hold back from action. The monolith of male dominance is subverted by Lucia's directness. The men are having to take notice of her. She offers a role model to Tambu and the other women. Good answers commented on the slapstick elements of her assault, and explored the manner in which her treatment of Takesure and his helpless submission to her physical force are described. Some noticed that even the patriarchy smiles at these events. Candidates understood the politics of gender equality and used the term patriarch / patriarchal confidently. The more able were also capable of seeing that Lucia's behaviour was the beginning of emancipation for some of the other female characters. However, there was little engagement with the language or understanding of the humour in the passage. Candidates struggled to show how Babamukuru's power was thwarted and to comment on his reaction. Candidates did not address the strength of personality that Lucia would have to exhibit in order to break into this patriarchal conference. Nor did they comment on her adopting masculine attitudes and resorting to violence.

Question 23

The relationship between Babamukuru and his wife is quite complex. Both have experience of different cultures, and Maiguru on her return from England seems to have made a conscious decision to subordinate Babamukuru's patriarchal status. For much of the novel, she only infrequently attempts to make him change his mind and uses a good deal of baby talk in trying to keep him sweet. He clearly requires her to have the last word, and seems unwilling or unable to change. Maiguru is clearly frustrated that her educational qualifications count for nothing beside his, and that he takes all her salary. Maiguru's five day visit to her brother seems to mark a change in the balance of power. The relationship is presented through the narrator's description of it, together with their daughter Nyasha's comments. Some candidates misunderstood the relationship between Maiguru and Babamukuru and suggested that it was one of love, and that Maiguru was happy to look after Babamukuru and content not to work.

Question 24

Mr Matimba appears to have recognised some potential in Tambu and has given her a chance to realise it by the attempt to sell mealies. He receives ten pounds from Doris, having had to convince her that he was not exploiting Tambu as child labour. In order to do this, he has had to play a role as a subservient and ingratiating black man to this old white woman, which, given his behaviour elsewhere, is unlikely to have been a pleasure for him. He may well be thinking now that this trip was worthwhile. He has clearly given thought to how to dispose of the money. He may well be anticipating some resistance to his plans from Tambu's parents, but will be determined that the money made will be put to good use towards Tambu's education. This was well answered on the whole, with good understanding and good knowledge of the text, including suitable condemnation of Tambu's parents and brother. It was interesting that little was made of the encounter with Doris. Tambu's ambitions and calibre were given due attention.

Fasting, Feasting

Question 25

Arun is suffering physical discomfort and has almost had an accident. He is also suffering mental discomfort, as he does not understand the family dynamics. 'Arun knows when to leave a family scene'. He does not fit in with the American way of life, he is revolted by the meat-eating, and he is bemused by Melanie and Rod. Good answers commented on the violence of 'the seeping blood of whatever carcass Mr Patton has chosen...', and the irony of 'one can not tell what is more dangerous in this country, the pursuit of health or of sickness'. There was clearly a sense of engagement with Arun and his feelings of isolation. Candidates explored both his physical and his emotional discomfort, and commented closely on how Desai had crafted this.

Question 26

Melanie is truculent, bad mannered, and uncommunicative. She lacks a meaningful relationship with her parents and they are apparently unconcerned - particularly her father. She is bulimic. This question was answered less well than the others on this text. Little sympathy or understanding was felt for Melanie; most candidates considered her to be rude and aggressive, but had little understanding of bulimia or Desai's critique of some American values.

Question 27

Dr Dutt would be reviewing the visit and its purpose and thinking about Uma and her potential, her impressions of MamaPapa, and her thoughts about the position of women in this society. The voice would be educated and westernised. Not many examples were seen of responses to this question and few displayed a secure grasp of the moment specified.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 28

The morning activities might be thought to show Mr. Chawla as a ridiculous man of great self-importance and self-satisfaction, of busy, busy energy, who expects to be waited on hand and foot by the women of the family and to be listened to whenever he opens his mouth to spout an opinion. Many candidates wrote on the extract but struggled to understand how personality was revealed. There was quite a narrative approach by some of the candidates, and many seemed not to be able to view Mr Chawla's early morning routine as a

facet of his organised and rather rigid personality. Few candidates were sensitive to any of the implications of the passage.

Question 29

Two approaches might be adopted. Sampath clearly likes a life of leisure. His ideal is to be waited upon, and he relishes being the centre of interest on his own terms. He is also capable of radiating apparent wisdom. Alternatively it might be argued that he is a genuine dreamer, and does have some natural and rather mysterious affinity with the natural world. Candidates tended to answer this question well. Many were able to link the events before Sampath's birth with his personality as he grew up, and his behaviour in the guava orchard.

Question 30

Sweet Miss Jyotsna who worships Sampath is likely to be thinking that this is the most dreadful moment of her life. She will have no idea what has happened or where he has gone, just that what has become her mission to support him has suddenly evaporated. Now there just remains her boring life at the post office. Voices for Miss Jyotsna ranged from grief to pleasure to anger to heartbreak. Some candidates were uncertain about what her voice should be. A few more successful candidates wrote knowledgeably about life in the Post Office, the flirting, and Sampath's knowledge of secrets.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

The arid and unpleasant quality of the landscape, Wilson's run-down premises, and the general air of poverty provide a suitably unpleasant – and symbolic – backdrop. Both George and Myrtle are described in unattractive terms; George is weak and colourless, Myrtle overweight and overdone and contemptuous of George. Tom is able to control both of them. This was a very popular question that produced a range of responses. The best covered both parts of the question and focused on 'unpleasant', whereas some only looked at one aspect of the task. Most were able to comment on Wilson (with some condemning him because he looked 'anaemic') and most picked up on Myrtle's attitude towards her husband, especially her 'walking through her husband as if he were a ghost'. The best answers made critical comment on the effect of the language used by Fitzgerald and the impact of the adjectives.

Question 32

Candidates might well have commented on the parties and those who attend them, the conspicuous consumption and greed, the class consciousness (new and old money), and the lack of depth in the relationships. Gatsby himself thinks that money is the answer to everything. Though candidates had clearly been taught about 'the Jazz Age', some had difficulty in producing cohesive arguments here and limited themselves to Daisy's reaction to Gatsby's shirts, and to Tom's philandering. The best answers were very condemnatory of the way in which Gatsby is sued by the party-goers, and that none turn up at his funeral.

Question 33

Gatsby will be thinking about Tom's reaction when he was told that Daisy did not love him, Daisy's behaviour, and the effect on her of the accusation of bootlegging. He will also be thinking about the journey home. Responses showed an accurate knowledge of textual detail; many failed to capture Gatsby's 'shock' and 'despair', a few completely misunderstood his reaction (e.g. optimistic about future). Some foretold the fact Daisy was in a state and that if she drove she might kill someone. The best answers had the right mix of Gatsby's turmoil, mulling over what had happened; especially what Daisy had said and why.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 34

It would be virtually impossible to write about the ending without making reference to earlier parts of the story, and to Leila's excitement and enjoyment of the dancing, which are deflated by the fat man's cynicism. The effect of his words and her recovery are conveyed very strikingly in the extract, and the discriminator was the extent to which answers went beyond narrative / description and focused on 'memorable', seeing the implications of the fat man's words and Mansfield's intentions. This was a fairly popular text and question,

with lots of reference to detail overall in responses. There was, however, a popular misconception that the question was what made the ball memorable for Leila, rather than what made the writing memorable for the reader.

Question 35

In both cases the humour is what makes the story entertaining – in the Wodehouse it comes from the strong authorial voice, in *My Greatest Ambition* from the self-deprecating first person narrative. Answers needed to focus on significant detail: in *the Custody of the Pumpkin* on the way they the characters – ‘fluffy’ Lord Emsworth, his idiot son, the dour McAllister and the millionaire Mr Donaldson - are described and the interactions between them; in *My Greatest Ambition* on the contrast between the expectations of the boy of 13 and the reflections upon them of his older self. Most candidates were able to describe some things that were entertaining about the stories named, and some addressed the ways in which the writer made them so. Wodehouse was better understood than Lurie, though there were good answers on both. The most successful candidates were the ones who had the best grasp of the background and social setting of the former.

Question 36

The American will be thinking about his impressions of India, in particular this remote part, the meeting with Muni, the negotiations for the horse, his wife’s possible reactions and his intentions for the horse. The American makes great play of the fact that he is not rich. He has been completely baffled by most of the conversations with Muni, and there may well be a rather patronising tone to his observations. This was a popular question; content was reasonable and knowledge of detail sound. There were a few convincing Americans, but generally there was not a great deal of success in capturing the voice and the character was not clearly understood. Often responses could have done with including much more textual evidence.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13
Paper 13 (Open Books)

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- Showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text.
- Ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question.
- Maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract.
- Using a well-structured and developed argument.
- Supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared for the examination; knowledge of the texts was generally good, and most knew how to structure their answers and showed evidence of planning. Most candidates made appropriate question choices, though weaker candidates sometimes chose empathic questions that enabled them to show some knowledge and understanding, but not in a reasonably appropriate voice. When such candidates attempted a passage-based or essay question, they often fared better than in the empathic questions.

There were relatively few examples of rubric infringements and of the 'final answer syndrome', where it is obvious that time has run out and the final answer is much briefer and sketchier than the previous ones. In a few cases, candidates had written very lengthy plans, crossed them out and written almost identical final drafts. This is a waste of time in examination conditions and should be discouraged.

Overall there seemed to be a general understanding of meaning / ideas in the texts and a largely conscientious response to questions (even those responding in simple narrative); but only the most successful answers engaged with the language on a deeper level.

In general candidates used their knowledge of the texts judiciously, constructed convincing arguments, and illustrated them with apt quotations. The most successful went on to explore in detail the effects of language and imagery, and showed awareness of the authors' intentions. The best answers showed a close engagement with the texts and a real enjoyment of the books studied. It was noticeable, however, that a number of candidates were using pre-prepared material that was only loosely connected to the questions. It was a particular issue in answers to questions 4 and 35. Many candidates had been taught, or had picked up from external sources, material on Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, which they wrote about with much enthusiasm. This meant that there were a significant number of almost identical answers to Question 4 which began by referring to 'ethos' 'pathos' and 'logos', going on to identify these elements in the passage, but only tangentially touching on the terms of the question: 'How does Shakespeare make Antony such a persuasive and impressive figure at this moment in the play?' There was usually a little relevance to what makes him persuasive, but 'impressive' was often ignored, and there was little sense of context. Candidates at this level do not need to employ these technical terms. The main focus of the questions is always on their personal response and on their knowledge of the text. Similarly, a lot of rote material appeared in relation to *The Destructors* (Question 35), where candidates gave very general answers relying on assertions about how the war had damaged the children and perverted their moral sense, but not actually examining the details of the story or conveying what they personally found disturbing.

The point must be made that the words 'How' and 'In what ways' and 'explore' are specific directions to candidates that more than narrative is required; that the main consideration is writer's method, and reinforcing words like 'memorably', 'vividly', 'strikingly' are also directed to consideration of the language. It is strongly recommended that teachers should make learners aware of the importance of these terms and of the necessity to use them as the focus of their responses. Similarly the word 'significant' is one that candidates need to be familiar with, since it directs them to consideration of the function of a particular aspect of the text.

Lack of consideration of these words was particularly evident in some of the poetry answers. Whereas some candidates responded with enthusiasm and critical awareness to the poems selected, others seemed somewhat at sea and had difficulty in articulating anything beyond rough 'translations' or paraphrases of the poems. Sometimes they showed an awareness that they needed to explore the effect of language but they did this by means of general personal responses, describing how something made them feel rather than by examining the way in which the poet creates an effect. It was good to see that there was less 'feature spotting' and no particularly 'fashionable' critical term this session, but there was a continuing tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be used instead of words which identify effects precisely.

Similarly there was a lack of really close reading of the extracts in some weaker answers to the * questions. Every session the Principal Examiner's Report comments on the necessity for candidates to give more than narrative run-throughs and to look analytically at the language used. Furthermore, the whole of the extract is important; it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for the discussion. Though there is not usually a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it and it is easy to detect a lack of knowledge of the whole text.

Empathic questions generated some of the higher-scoring responses, with several assuming a credible voice; that said, some responses in this category produced narrowly focused answers, often ignoring broader aspects of the character or their significance in the play / novel. Most candidates knew the importance of writing 'in character', and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question.

In the past, it has been commented that the sense of drama is underdeveloped in responses to the plays on the papers and this continues to be a concern. For example, the best answers to questions on *Julius Caesar* showed an understanding of the visual qualities of the scene, and of the dynamics between the characters, as well as responding to changes in tone and mood. Weaker answers merely gave run-throughs of the passages. Though it is appreciated that not all candidates will be able to see plays in production, the acting of scenes in class is an important tool in developing this sense. Too often candidates refer to plays as 'books', revealing that they see them only as words on a page.

It may seem a trivial issue, but there was some poorly presented work, thankfully a minority, with handwriting that was very difficult to decipher. Candidates do themselves a disservice if they do not take pride in their work, and chaotic presentation often reflects a lack of coherence in the answer.

There follow notes on all the texts indicating some of the ideas that candidates might have used in their answers. They are not intended to be seen as templates for perfect answers; any relevant ideas that were supported from the text were credited. There are also indications of what candidates did particularly well, and areas in which they were not quite so successful.

SECTION A: DRAMA

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

Charley comes across in this extract as someone who genuinely cares for Willy's welfare. He senses that Willy is very unsettled and seeks to quieten things down with a game of cards, and by attempting to put things in perspective. He recognises that Willy is commercially a failure yet out of kindness offers him a job. He maintains his good humour despite Willy several times insulting him. This question was a popular choice. Most candidates were able to find relevant points about Charley's 'goodness'. In some cases, candidates wrote more about Willy than Charley, and responses lacked focus. Some responses were very literal and failed to see below the surface meaning. Detailed understanding of deceptively simple language and the way it can be interpreted in this particular context was the factor that discriminated between different

candidates' responses. Less accomplished answers gave a 'running commentary' of the rather than analysing what was going on 'between the lines'.

Question 2

Candidates might have expressed sympathy for Biff and Happy in the light of the way they have been brought up, the spurious set of values and assumptions given them by Willy, their resultant failure in the real world, and Biff's final facing up to the truth. They may also have found them unsympathetic characters who are full of bombast, macho in their attitudes, and in the case of Happy whining in failure. Again, most candidates were able to find at least some valid points to write about. This question also seemed to generate engaged responses and identification with characters. The main weakness was not enough detailed support and points that were quite general. Overall, there was little evaluation. Most candidates only really discussed how one can sympathise with the two boys, rather than offering a balanced perspective. The best answers saw the significance of Willy's upbringing and how it created the path to adulthood for his two sons, but were able to cite some unforgivable behaviour as well. Some weaker candidates were completely confused about the time differences within the play, and some were under the impression that Happy knew about 'the woman' and Boston.

Question 3

Willy is in despair and may be thinking that his life is effectively over, and that he can no longer face the continuing and humiliating failure of all his dreams. Less despairingly he may also be thinking that now despite everything Biff does love him, and that his death with the insurance and the house paid for will help Biff at last to be the success he yearned for in a son. Those candidates who chose this question sometimes found it difficult to pitch – should it be delusional to the end, or a mixture of this and coming to terms with the reality of failure? Better answers integrated some excellent textual references and showed strong personal engagement with the text.

Julius Caesar

Question 4

(See general comments above). In answering this question the context is not directly required but helpful. Antony is successfully discrediting Brutus and the other conspirators by his emotional description of the actual killing, and his 'modesty'. The crowd are eating out of his hand. This question was by far the most popular choice. Generally candidates were well prepared and able to offer some valid points. Most were able to identify some of Anthony's persuasive features. Many candidates however did not go quite far enough in their analysis. They made an initial comment on an identified feature but could have drawn out more significance. Higher achieving candidates were able to explore the power and effectiveness of the writing, and conveyed a real sense of enjoyment. There were some impressive pieces of analysis, although more distinction between 'persuasive' and 'impressive' would have improved some answers. Many candidates offered valid but general points which were not supported well enough or rooted in the text. Similarly, some candidates fixated on explaining the Aristotelian techniques that are used in the speech to the extent that they never got around to discussing the language itself in any detail.

Question 5

Candidates needed to consider the different motives of the characters, Brutus's domination of them, and the lack of clear objectives following the death of Caesar. They needed also to look at Antony and Octavius and their alliance. The best answers were able to consider a range of evidence from throughout the play, rather than focus entirely on the relationship between Brutus and Cassius.

Question 6

Cassius will be feeling delight and satisfaction at the achievement and thinking about what has led up to this, his relationship with Brutus, and his vision for the future. There were relatively few attempts at this question, but the material was generally well known and most candidates created convincing voices for Cassius; the best seamlessly integrating quotations or echoes of the text.

The Tempest

Question 7

Some of the comic effect of this scene is visual, and stronger candidates were likely to show some awareness of this. Stephano's misapprehension concerning the hybrid beast is compounded by the fact that he has taken drink, and has given some to Caliban. Trinculo's emergence from Caliban's gabardine provides some comedy. Caliban's amazement at the appearance of the two drunkards swiftly turns to oaths of allegiance. Candidates might find the contrast between their concern about supplies of drink and Caliban's awed worship of them both amusing and moving, the poignancy enhanced by Trinculo's mockery. The more perceptive may have noted how Caliban's response to these two parallels Miranda's reaction to her 'brave new world'. This was a very popular choice and generally produced reasonable answers. Candidates seemed well prepared and had quite a lot of background knowledge. Generally, candidates were able to respond in varying degrees to 'amusing', and less so to 'moving'. Some candidates went off on a tangent about theories of colonisation and slavery. A noticeable feature of the best answers was that candidates were aware of the visual aspect of the scene, and made reference to the audience perspective.

Question 8

Much depended on the choice of scene. In some cases, music accompanies magic, so that it signals the beginning and end of a period when some of the characters are under the influence of the supernatural (e.g. the plot between Antonio and Sebastian). Ariel's songs lead Ferdinand to Miranda and Prospero, and so are instrumental in plot development. Some of the songs are more ribald and show the influence of strong drink. Candidates needed to remember to focus on dramatic impact in order to merit higher marks. This was not a popular choice, and it is therefore difficult to make comment about general performance.

Question 9

Prospero has engineered this encounter, so he will be pleased that his plans are working out. He may be reflecting on his hopes for the outcome of their meeting but he will, like any protective father, have some concerns for his daughter. He will be revising his assessment of the merits of her suitor, and may well be reflecting on the wider implications of his daughter's involvement with Ferdinand's family. There were some assured assumptions made about the character here. The material was generally well known, and most candidates were able to create a reasonably convincing voice.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

Wilde here is ridiculing the hardly credible revelations so common to Victorian melodrama. Jack, having discovered that Miss Prism is not his unmarried mother, discovers he is Algernon's long lost brother which makes him Lady Bracknell's nephew, which makes him eligible, just, to marry Gwendolen, provided that his name is Ernest, which fortunately it is. Many candidates tackled this question but relatively few managed to address it successfully. The farcical elements of the drama were generally missed at this point. Most candidates were able to refer back to earlier moments in the drama, and support their thinking with some textual reference to suggest straightforward changes in the behaviour and outlook of key players. However they tended to miss the comedy of the language; the sense of energy from younger members of the cast; how that energy might contrast with Lady Bracknell; and the speed with which all issues are resolved. All these features help create a sense of *hilarity*, a more intense quality than merely being funny.

Question 11

There is a wealth of material from which to choose. It could include such things as Wilde's ridicule of the arcane customs of this society as set out, for instance, by Lady Bracknell, its snobbery, its idleness and boredom, and its ineffectuality in controlling the desires of the young. He constantly undermines moral and social norms by turning them wittily on their heads. There was a tendency with some candidates attempting this question to provide broad assertions about aspects of Victorian life, rather than focus on those aspects of behaviour and values demonstrated within the drama.

Question 12

Proposing to Gwendolen is Jack's pre-occupation at this moment. Therefore he is likely to be hoping that his decision to call on Algernon will prove a way of meeting her, that he can separate her from her Mother's inevitable attendance, and that his proposal will be successful. There were only a few responses to this question so it is difficult to make any general judgements about performance.

SECTION B: POETRY

There are many ways of interpreting a poem; there follow ideas that the poems in question might suggest. Any ideas that could be supported were credited, and answers which explored the imagery and showed sensitivity to the music of the poetry gained high reward.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

This was a less popular text than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who had studied it showed a good deal of engagement with the poems, probably because of their narrative qualities and the musicality of the verse forms. Discrimination, as ever, came from the degree of detailed analysis of the language.

Question 13

The ending of the poem is so sad because of the setting – it is autumn and it is raining, and there is a sense of death about the environment. The Lady is in a trance-like state; she seems to be moving almost automatically, and her death is described as slow and cold. Also significant are Sir Lancelot's reaction and the reactions of the local people. The regular, even inexorable, rhythm contributes to the inevitability of the Lady's demise.

Question 14

Candidates needed to consider what is meant by 'disturbing' – is it the character's physical or mental state? They might have fixed on Mariana's isolation, neglect, betrayal by her lover and the way in which all this is reflected by the moated grange, or on the Speaker's turmoil in *Maud*. The death of his lover seems to have rendered him in a state of living death. They needed to look at the way in which the words and images, and the versification of the poems, reinforce these ideas.

Question 15

The change of mood from grief and despair to a more optimistic feeling looking forward to the New Year is very different from other sections of the poem. There has been a movement from introversion to more social and political concerns – there is a sense of the existence of the rest of the world. The four line verse form, and the repetition of 'Ring out', has an exhilarating effect and the language reflects the rejection of 'the false' and the positive values of 'sweeter manners' 'purer laws' etc.

Songs Of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

The horses are described with the hyperbolic terms: 'monsters', 'seraphim', 'gigantic', and the wider language of the poem is elemental: 'apocalyptic', 'ecstatic', 'rage invisible and blind'. Imagery is associated with heat and light, and with machinery and mechanical power. A key point is the child's viewpoint and the way in which this is conveyed through the vision of the horses. A large number of candidates responded to this question. Most candidates focused on the concept of 'power' in *Horses* really well, and were able to identify some of the features in the poem with varying degrees of ability, and to explain the significance of these and how the writing works. Generally, there was understanding and nearly always a high level personal response. In the best answers there was close analysis of language which developed interpretations, and linked with the way words had been used elsewhere in the poem. Candidates who were able to see the contrast between the poet's childish and adult perspectives derived more from the poem.

Question 17

This was another popular choice, with both poems being considered. Again, candidates were able to identify the imagery in the poems and make some valid comments about these. In responses to *A Birthday*, some candidates did not understand that this was referring to a spiritual experience, and wrote instead about

Rossetti's 'lover' or 'husband'. Generally candidates were able to analyse the language though the significance in the choice of objects used.

Question 18

The focus of the question is on capturing a moment in time, so candidates who merely provided an account or paraphrase of their chosen poem were unlikely to achieve high reward. In *Hunting Snake* there are specific time markers. There is a contrast between the snake's activity and the relative passivity of the human observers. There is detailed description of the observer's behaviour in *The Woodspurge*, and the acuteness of the poet's observations merit comment. What is going on in the poet's mind at the moment is the key to *Continuum*, and candidates may have commented on the particularity of the poet's observations and on the tentativeness of much of the diction. This question was less popular, although there were still quite a large number of responses. Those who selected *Hunting Snake* were able to produce engaged answers, which picked out several valid points about the snake, the background, and the poet's response. Answers to the other two poems were less successful. In *The Woodspurge*, some were able to see deeper meaning but a number of answers were muddled, only commenting on surface meaning. *Continuum* produced answers of varying degrees of competency. A number of candidates struggled to make precise points, and seemed to plod their way through this poem, making statements that identified features rather than meaningful comments.

SECTION C: PROSE

Wuthering Heights

This was not a popular text and so it is difficult to make any comment about performance.

Question 19

The power and immediacy of Lockwood's dream, such that it hovers between dream and reality, is compelling. At one point there is terrible violence, and the reader does not know Catherine's story at this stage and is mystified by the dream's significance. Heathcliff's intrusion and appearance are quite different to how he has been seen hitherto.

Question 20

Brontë makes these houses stand for the opposite poles of existence played out by the characters in the novel. Thrushcross Grange is an elegant house with a lovely garden, where the sun shines often. It is also a place of privilege cut off from common life. *Wuthering Heights* is a gaunt forbidding house, which seems to battle the surrounding bleak landscape and is constantly lashed by the elements. It is life at its most basic.

Question 21

Of course, Heathcliff is in despair. He is likely to be thinking that he has lost the only person who made his life worthwhile, that marriage to the contemptible Edgar Linton drained the life from her, and that this man will pay for it in full measure. His life's purpose is now even more a quest for vengeance against the Lintons and their kind, and Isabella is key to this.

Nervous Conditions

Question 22

Before this point, Tambu has given the impression that her aunt is almost cloyingly sweet, although there have been glimpses of another side of her from time to time. Here, the hint of some deep-seated and usually well-suppressed discontent becomes much stronger. Candidates' responses could range from sympathetic understanding of Maiguru's plight to condemnation of her for the compromises she has decided to make. Candidates understood the passage, but only the best answers grasped the ambivalence of Maiguru's response at the end of the passage. Furthermore, few candidates discussed language, which is key to addressing 'In what ways?'

Question 23

Much of the interaction between Babamukuru and Lucia is characterised by the tension established in Chapter 6. Babamukuru visits the homestead in Chapter 7 to discover that Lucia and Takesure have not yet left, despite his orders. Lucia is determined not to be ignored, and Babamukuru as a patriarchal figure clearly expects to be obeyed and finds it difficult to deal with a free spirit. Lucia uses her expertise and experience in dealing with men in dealing with Babamukuru. He is clearly perplexed by her behaviour at the *dare*, and is unable to deal with her effectively. Her manipulative skills are evident when she tells him she would like a job, although her gratitude seems genuine. This does not prevent her from straight talking in defence of Tambu, something which earns perhaps unexpected praise from Babamukuru.

Question 24

Nhamo as presented through Tambu's narration is not a very likeable boy. At this stage he is likely to be filled with a sense of his own destiny, and a self-congratulatory sense of entitlement. He may be thinking dismissively of his sister and possibly the rest of his immediate family. He may make a passing acknowledgement of his debt to Babamukuru, but such is his sense of his own worth that it is unlikely to figure too prominently. There were some appropriately nasty Nhamos! It was evident that candidates found it satisfying to get to grips with a character like this in an empathic response.

Fasting, Feasting

There were insufficient answers to these questions to make any general comments on candidates' performance.

Question 25

The extract is sad because of Uma's situation. She is dominated by parents and has to be 'disposed of' like a chattel. The quality of the suitors is depressing, as is their reason for pursuing her. Equally sad are MamaPapa's attitude and the way in which the bridegroom behaves. On the other hand the way in which Uma is prepared for the photograph, the way in which the suitors and their relatives present themselves, and the description of the wedding party are all comical.

Question 26

Arun's parents' have unreasonable expectations and he has years of 'swotting' – he does not seem to have a normal childhood. He is virtually in exile in the USA where he feels completely alienated. He does not appear to have much capacity for making decisions for himself, but he seems a kind and considerate young man (with Mrs Patton for example) which makes us like him.

Question 27

Mr Patton will be thinking about this young man from a different world and his reaction to the food. The barbeque will be in the forefront of his mind. He may be thinking of his family and the impact this young man will have on it.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

There were insufficient answers to these questions to make any general comments on candidates' performance.

Question 28

In this extract Desai satirises officialdom's consistent placing of personal ambition before public good. The Brigadier dreams of fame and honour, and naturally thinks that a blunt military solution is what is required. The CMO wants to escape Shahkot and thinks that a drive against drink will rebound to his credit in medical circles. The Superintendent of Police of all people wants a quiet life and to stay where he is, and hence declines the risk of offering any plan whatsoever.

Question 29

Desai's portrayal might be thought to convey a wide range of responses. On the one hand the reader might view Shahkot as noisy chaos where nothing works, corruption and inefficiency are rife, and life is a constant struggle with people living cheek by jowl. It might also be viewed as a colourful and vibrant place, where the inhabitants are lively and for the most part good humoured and neighbourly.

Question 30

How will this shy and ineffectual man, who has been gifted this post probably through his father, explain the hornet's nest he has uncovered? He is likely to be thinking in despair how to explain the mayhem created by the monkeys, the uproar created by the plans for their removal, the unexplained disappearance of the local guru and cash cow, and finally the loss of the cook who has served his predecessors with such diligence.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

The context is inescapable: Wilson's reaction to the death of Myrtle, Michaelis's failure to comfort him, and the information about the yellow car planted by Tom. The narrative of Wilson's last movements largely deduced by Nick or put together later, and the inferences about Gatsby's movements up to his discovery in the pool, are told dispassionately by Nick. He attributes all sorts of thoughts and feeling to Gatsby which can only be inferred. There is a sort of calmness and inevitability about the account of the death of both men which terminates in the shock of 'the holocaust was complete'. The fact that the shooting is not directly described makes the whole event more powerful. Generally, this question produced answers which showed candidates were well-prepared and had an overall knowledge of the plot. Most candidates grasped something of the 'dramatic climax', and the higher achievers were able to explore the writing in detail. Better answers were able to discuss the way it was structured, the way it lacked dialogue, the dramatic irony, the language, the understatements, and Gatsby's lost dream.

Question 32

Candidates needed to define 'careless'. They are careless about other people and their feelings, of the consequences of their actions. Tom is careless vis a vis Daisy and Myrtle. He is unconcerned and lacking in guilt about his adultery. Did Daisy ever really love Gatsby? She takes the first suitor to come along after his departure. They are also able to move on and resume their normal life at the end of the novel. This was quite a popular choice and again most candidates seemed well-prepared, with some knowledge and understanding of the characters. Although most responses were able to offer reasonable points of an argument, in many cases these could have been more detailed and better supported from the text question or novel. Weakest answers were unable to move much beyond stating that Daisy's 'murder' of Myrtle showed that she was a careless driver. Many candidates explained that because of Nick's comments at the beginning of the novel his view point was one that should be trusted, and then developed their arguments from there. Usually they were well supported and often quite personal. Some candidates however took a far too general approach and wrote about The American Dream without much detailed relation to the novel or the question.

Question 33

Nick will be thinking about the visit to the garage and the apartment on 158th Street with Tom, Tom and Myrtle and Daisy, and Tom's attack on Myrtle. He will be considering the implications. His reactions could be inferred from his usual voice.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 34

The context is not explicitly required, but is helpful in establishing the fact that the American does not speak Tamil and expects all Indians to be able to speak English. Muni has been giving a 'long peroration', none of which has been understood. The American's focus on the horse and Muni's lack of comprehension (he hardly even notices the horse because it has been there for so long) are comic, as are Muni's narration of his life history, and the incongruity of the American's proposed new setting for the horse in light of what it means to the villagers. This was quite a popular choice and produced a range of answers. Most candidates were able to grasp the humour in the miscommunication, and make some valid comment about this. In many

cases, though, candidates did not explore and analyse the passage in enough detail, and responses were general rather than detailed.

Question 35

(See general comments above). In *The Destructors* the youth of the children, their lack of emotion, their lack of concern for Mr Thomas, and their enjoyment of the process of destruction are all worthy of comment, as is the effect on them of the War. In *The Rain Horse*, the way in which the horse appears malevolent and to be targeting the man, the almost surreal quality of it, the weather and the surroundings should be explored. This was a popular choice, in which candidates seemed to be quite fascinated with the boys' actions in *The Destructors* and wrote with engagement. Nearly all candidates were able to comment on some aspects of 'disturbing', and there were some very perceptive answers which were enjoyable to read. Some, however, went off on a tangent about the parallel in the story to Nazism and Hitler. Although a few comments about this could have been relevant, it was not necessary to write about this in detail. Relevance to the question is the prime consideration. *The Rain Horse* was not as popular but candidates were able to grasp the 'disturbing' aspect, and included comments about the weather and the uneasy atmosphere.

Question 36

Harold will be thinking about his concerns about his father's financial difficulties, his relationship with him generally and the 'two faces', the obsession with the fly, and the end of the meeting and his father's final words. A few candidates chose this empathic question and most were able to convey the son's mixed feelings for his father. Background details showed that candidates were well prepared and familiar with the story. Some struggled to capture the authenticity of the text and sustain this throughout.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/02
Coursework

Key messages

The following points should be noted:

- When framing tasks, teachers should check that the wording allows candidates to meet the relevant assessment criteria. There must be an explicit focus on the writer in critical essay tasks.
- All pages of candidates' work must bear evidence of teacher annotation to justify the award of a particular mark.
- All relevant paperwork, including mark sheets and candidates' individual record cards, should be completed accurately and checked before submission.

General comments

The majority of candidates produced engaging work on the texts they had studied. The strongest assignments demonstrated a sustained engagement with both the text and the task they had been set.

However, some candidates were not able to access the higher marks, as tasks did not invite them to consider aspects of the writing. The assessment criteria for coursework make it clear that for the higher bands there must be evidence of a detailed exploration of writers' effects: 'candidates should respond sensitively and in detail to the way the writer achieves his / her effects' (a Band 2 descriptor). Tasks that ask for a description of how a character (e.g. Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Romeo or Juliet) changes through the text are not sufficiently challenging. Tasks inviting description rather than analysis do not enable candidates to demonstrate higher order skills: e.g. 'Describe in detail the problems that hinder Romeo and Juliet's romance'. A more suitable task would be: *Explore the ways in which Shakespeare vividly conveys the problems that hinder Romeo and Juliet's romance.*

Guidance on effective task-setting (with examples of both suitable and unsuitable tasks) can be found in the 0486 Coursework Training Handbook. Past Set Texts examination papers also provide examples of tasks framed in such a way that they enable candidates of all abilities to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills.

All tasks should be checked against the syllabus requirements. Texts studied should be literary texts that are suitably challenging for IGCSE level; that is, they should be broadly comparable with the texts studied for the examination papers.

For most Centres there was clear evidence that effective internal moderation had (where appropriate) taken place. This was demonstrated in effective task-setting and consistently accurate marking across teaching groups. All teachers are reminded that they should tick valid and thoughtful points in candidates' work, and base their summative comments on the wording of the official assessment criteria. Many teachers also add marginal comments which point out the relative strengths of assignments. Such annotation enables the individual teacher to justify the awarding of a particular mark, both to their colleagues within the Centre and to the external Moderator. This is an important part of the moderation process.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31

Unseen

Key Messages

- Centres must use the correct *stationery* provided by Cambridge, and candidates should do all they can to achieve legibility and to write their answers in the correct space.
- Relevant responses address the stem *question*, not just the bullet points.
- Good responses move beyond narrative, and explore the *writer's techniques*.
- *Quotation* should be used to comment on the writer's use of language and its effect.
- The techniques of both poetry and prose need *analysis*, not just identification.
- The best answers evaluate the *deeper implications* of the text, interpreting the writer's purpose and the impact of the writing on the reader.

General Comments

This session produced many strong responses across the different time zones and variant papers; more candidates are writing with the sensitivity, detail and engagement with the task to achieve marks in Band 2 and above, and weak answers in Band 7 and below are becoming increasingly rare. Most candidates make extensive reference to the words of the text. Many at least begin to explore and engage with the writers' use of language and specific effects, and to respond to the impact these make on the reader. There are fewer examples of 'fair copies', over-lengthy or illegible scripts: most candidates shape and structure their responses well. There is plenty of evidence that teachers use these reports, act on the advice given and pass this on to candidates; planning, effective use of quotation and a concluding evaluation are all more evident than in the past, and more candidates are now choosing to write about the prose passages and using appropriate analytical tools to do so.

It is essential that the new marking booklets are used correctly (continuation sheets should only be used for that purpose), that candidates do all they can to make their answers legible, and that they do not write in any of the margins. Centres should now be used to the new Cambridge stationery and changes to the way in which we require answers to be presented.

It might be especially useful for Centres to review the general qualities which distinguish good scripts from average ones. The first requirement of scripts at Band 5 and above is relevance: the stem question should guide the response and be answered. Although the bullet points can help candidates to shape an answer to the question, they are not themselves the question, and the best candidates often ignore them and answer the question more holistically. The question itself must not be ignored, and attention paid to each aspect of a two-part question e.g. 'serious and amusing' or 'horror and dark humour'. The question is designed to draw attention to the writing and to its effect on the reader. It thus helps candidates to address AO3 (language, structure and form) and AO4 (an informed personal response). 'Personal response' should, for strong candidates, be personal response to the writing and not to the imagined situation.

It follows that a good answer always moves beyond a paraphrase of the narrative of the text. A well-supported narrative account of the poem or passage, illustrated by quotation, can achieve a good Band 6 mark; but to move beyond this level there must be engagement with the writer's purpose, and how this is communicated to the reader.

In responses to poetry, there was a tendency for weaker candidates simply to identify various poetic devices such as simile, alliteration or metaphor without comment on their purpose or effect. In responses to prose,

candidates should beware of concentrating exclusively on the narrative and how it unfolds: good answers also address the writer's use of description, the drama of dialogue and its effect, and the creative use of narrative voice or point-of-view. These are the prose writer's tools, and without an analytical approach to them, it is difficult for responses to prose to match the complexity of what candidates can achieve in writing about poetry.

Attention to the writer's language, style and purpose immediately takes a candidate's response further than the surface literal meaning of the text, allowing interpretation of possible figurative meaning. This is also a key strand in the Assessment Objectives for English Literature, involving exploration 'beyond surface meaning' (AO2). Answers at Band 4 and above are expected to address the text's 'deeper implications', so it is essential to delve further than the surface narrative and comment on the effect on the reader. Good candidates analyse the effects of language choices and the best candidates evaluate the overall impact of texts, both through sensitive response to detail and critical appreciation of their overall and cumulative effect. Responses awarded Band 2 and above therefore need to address the writer's purpose critically, and understand genre; showing sustained engagement with how the text works and with why it achieves an interesting and memorable effect.

It was good to note a high number of responses showing thoroughness of response to language, and an increasing number demonstrated the kind of independent critical engagement with both the writing and the power of its impact on the individual reader which makes this component so satisfying to study, teach and indeed examine. The variety and individuality of responses is a pleasure, and it is equally rewarding to see how key skills for success as critical readers of Literature are becoming so firmly embedded among the candidature for this paper.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The poem 'Antony' by the Lincolnshire poet Antony Dunn clearly made an immediate narrative appeal to candidates, who quickly picked up both the confidence of 'the day before' and the erosion of that confidence by 'the tide of you' by the person who then walks into his life, with 'hair alive in wind-hiss from the sea', the following day. A pleasing number of candidates were able to pick up the classical allusions subtly embedded in the text. They referred to both to the arrogance of classical statuary, and the idea of a Medusa whose gaze reduces those captivated by her into stone and rubble. Most appreciated that the poem worked through a series of images, although fewer were able to see ways of connecting those similes and metaphors in order to explain the overall impact of the poem. However, such responses were able to move far beyond the surface narrative of boy meets girl and therefore achieved higher reward.

When writing about a poem, or indeed most prose passages, it is always a good idea to ask who is speaking and to whom they are speaking. The answers are not always obvious. This poem appears to be spoken by the young Antony, who appears to be a youthful version of the poet. Certainly candidates enjoyed the slightly satirical or ironic portrayal of male adolescent arrogance and self-assurance, and responded to this personally. However, he actually imagines lines 3 and 4 to be spoken by the sea, who is bragging about her creation emerging from the waters and standing like a statue on the shore. Few candidates were aware of this, or of the convention in poems and prose that lines printed in italics are spoken by a voice different from the narrator's. However, many appreciated that the persona was indulging in a fantasy, and they enjoyed the sensuous and descriptive implications of 'jewelled with sun-drops' and 'the taste of salt'.

Most candidates enjoyed and commented on the description of his 'porpoising' and 'breast-stroking' around the rocks, and linked this to his 'bragging'. However, more able candidates also noted the humour and irony at work: the colloquial diction – 'plonked', 'the big effect' 'at the standing up' and (later) 'would have slayed you' – are the clue to this. A greater focus on tone, and how it is determined by the choice of words, would have helped responses on both this question and **Question 2**. The words hint that the poet is mocking the self-conscious display of his younger self. As one candidate wrote: 'on the actual day, the person was not impressed by his look, his pants or his muscles'.

Good answers spotted to whom the poem is really addressed. It is not directed at us, but at the other person, the Medusa who turned him to stone and never saw him on that day at all. Some very strong responses use the image of the sand-dial 'ticking all the time away' to see the whole poem as a meditation on time and fate, as much as on the destructive nature of love. Plenty of reasonably strong answers showed appreciation of the time sequence and saw the middle of the poem as a turning point, with a shift of focus from him to her. Weaker responses tended to concentrate on just the first three stanzas. Many appreciated

the way he presents himself as a bronzed and muscled statue, with the boastful simile of legs 'fixed as stone in slings'. The best answers were able to connect these images to other images of stone in the poem, and to see how this image of solidity crumbles, beginning with the conditional verbs in this stanza and the pivotal conjunction 'But'.

Stronger responses saw the impact made by her 'legendary step' from the car and into the one street, each step marked by name-plaques 'fixed as memorials'. They appreciated that it is the other person who now attains mythical status, and turns him first to stone and then to sand. The paralysing impact of her beauty turning his 'tongue to stone' was understood by most, and many appreciated the way her hair is personified and brought to life, although more might have commented on the sound effects and her connection to nature. Some noticed that she appears on the 'cliff-top', far above him, marking her superiority.

Final stanzas and final lines, and the way they are treated by the candidate, often allow Examiners to make judgements about stronger scripts. Only the best had much to say about the 'name-plaques' (and how she is memorialised rather than him) or the 'tide of you sorting the stone of me' (suggesting that she is a powerful *natural* force, in contrast to his own artificiality). There were interesting responses to the role of time in the poem and its final line, which could also be linked to ways in which the tenses and rhythms of the poem change to reflect the shift in its tone and concentration. Examiners felt there might have been more attention to the structure and form of these well-wrought quatrains, and the ways in which rhythm sometimes makes time rush on and sometimes makes it stand still. There is more to poetic form than rhyme.

Question 2

The extract from Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* proved to be especially popular with candidates who did this paper, and over two-thirds chose this question in preference to the poetry. Many seemed to know a little about the novel, or at least the film, although this did not provide an advantage. It is always most important to concentrate on the question and on the language and techniques of the passage, and additional knowledge can sometimes distract the candidate from the task set. Another area where a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing is use of historical, social or cultural context. This is not explicitly tested in this paper, or indeed anywhere in Cambridge IGCSE Literature, and some answers were overburdened with information about the American Civil Rights Movement or the relationships between black servants and white employers, when time would have been better spent on more focused engagement with the language of the passage.

The question explicitly asked for consideration of both serious and comic elements in the writing. While most were able to write seriously about Minny's nervous wait at the door, providing evidence for her anxiety and dependence on this job, and to explore the writer's portrayal of tension, fewer were able to see the funny side of her outlook, or the childish elements of her reaction to the '*bing-bong*' of the doorbell, or the witch-haunted woods surrounding the lawns. Those who extended their responses further and explored the second half of the passage found many humorous moments to engage with and explain, and good candidates were aware that Miss Celia turns out to be very different from Minny's expectations. The best saw a reversal of values here: indeed it is often Minny's attitudes which seem judgemental and prejudiced, and while it is sad that she cannot accept that Miss Celia's handshake and friendly offer of help are genuine, her alarm is also funny, as is her inability to 'tuck in' all her thoughts and words, and her determination to exploit the situation and take control on her own terms. Certainly it eventually becomes harder to judge who is taking advantage of whom.

Good answers always showed awareness of Minny's point of view, and the characteristics of her voice and attitude. Some waited to do this until prompted by the third bullet point, but the best responses realised the importance of her perspective and ways of seeing and thinking. These provided both the tension and the amusement throughout the passage. Some good responses noted the colloquial language she uses when thinking: 'Truth is', 'punch the bell', 'fine and fancy', 'ain't ready for no screen test', 'the rest of the kitchen took the real hit', 'don't you go sassin'', 'I'm a cooker', 'Shoot' and 'she just drug me'. They contrasted this with the very respectful language she uses to Miss Celia: 'Yes, ma'am, I'm Minny Jackson' and 'Maybe we better go and see the house first, ma'am.' The exception, when spotted, becomes especially funny – 'you sure do' – as it shows Minny's comic inability to hide her true 'sassy' character.

Minny's larger-than-life character received more detailed attention than Miss Celia. Some misunderstood the 'flour fiasco' and thought it applied to her make-up rather than her cooking. Only a few picked up the possibility that she was what a candidate called 'new rich', and just as nervous as Minny. Stronger answers again went beyond narrative and initial expectations, and contrasted Minny's expectation of the kind of witch that 'eat kids' with the reality of the kitchen catastrophe. Good answers looked at the way repetition is used to convey the ubiquity of 'flour', or the contrast between Celia's appearance and her lack of practicality.

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Some were suspicious of her appearance, which they called plastic, while others were more sympathetic to Minny's judgemental attitude to this 'Marilyn Monroe' or 'white trash'. Certainly the clash between her dislike of 'muck' and Celia's smiles and 'whispery Hollywood voice' was worth exploring in some detail. Too was the use of italics to show Minny nevertheless urging herself not to wreck this opportunity. There is plenty of both humour and seriousness to unpack here.

Weaker responses often spent too long on the details of the first three paragraphs. It is important when writing about quite a long passage of prose to have principles of selection. Details of language should be highlighted which help to illustrate an answer to the question, and planning is necessary to ensure that each element of the passage is dealt with successfully, allowing enough time for the way the passage ends. Stronger responses concentrated on how the writer presented Minny's voice and attitudes, and on the structure of the passage and the ways in which it reverses the reader's expectations. They spent as much time on the dialogue between the characters as on Minny's earlier descriptions.

Some interesting answers speculated intelligently about the reasons for Minny's suspicions of Miss Celia, and her hostile attitude to overtures of friendship. Here some used social context very well, integrating it with an examination of what language reveals of attitudes, while others detected a degree of envy. Several saw humour in the older woman's criticisms and delight in having to handle someone who was 'stupid', and there were several different readings of Minny's 'shiny hope', ranging from relief that she would get the job she so desperately needed, to a more malicious glee at the possibilities for mischief which were being revealed. It would have been good to have seen more comment on the humorous way in which Celia confused Minny's name: 'Maxie' does seem more appropriate for a larger-than-life character. Only a few realised that Celia is also an outsider and perhaps the two characters may have more in common, and more to share, than at first appears. She is certainly not the kind of 'witch' Minny feared she would be.

The passage, like the poem, proved accessible to a wide range of ability, with many moving beyond the narrative to appreciate the subtle structures of the writing, and the ways in which both dialogue and the narrative voice reveal underlying social attitudes and thus provoke a range of responses in the modern reader.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32

Unseen

Key Messages

- Centres must use the correct *stationery* provided by Cambridge, and candidates should do all they can to achieve legibility and to write their answers in the correct space.
- Relevant responses address the stem *question*, not just the bullet points.
- Good responses move beyond narrative, and explore the *writer's techniques*.
- *Quotation* should be used to comment on the writer's use of language and its effect.
- The techniques of both poetry and prose need *analysis*, not just identification.
- The best answers evaluate the *deeper implications* of the text, interpreting the writer's purpose and the impact of the writing on the reader.

General Comments

This session produced many strong responses across the different time zones and variant papers; more candidates are writing with the sensitivity, detail and engagement with the task to achieve marks in Band 2 and above, and weak answers in Band 7 and below are becoming increasingly rare. Most candidates make extensive reference to the words of the text. Many at least begin to explore and engage with the writers' use of language and specific effects, and to respond to the impact these make on the reader. There are fewer examples of 'fair copies', over-lengthy or illegible scripts: most candidates shape and structure their responses well. There is plenty of evidence that teachers use these reports, act on the advice given and pass this on to candidates; planning, effective use of quotation and a concluding evaluation are all more evident than in the past, and more candidates are now choosing to write about the prose passages and using appropriate analytical tools to do so.

It is essential that the new marking booklets are used correctly (continuation sheets should only be used for that purpose), that candidates do all they can to make their answers legible, and that they do not write in any of the margins. Centres should now be used to the new Cambridge stationery and changes to the way in which we require answers to be presented.

It might be especially useful for Centres to review the general qualities which distinguish good scripts from average ones. The first requirement of scripts at Band 5 and above is relevance: the stem question should guide the response and be answered. Although the bullet points can help candidates to shape an answer to the question, they are not themselves the question, and the best candidates often ignore them and answer the question more holistically. The question itself must not be ignored, and attention paid to each aspect of a two-part question e.g. 'serious and amusing' or 'horror and dark humour'. The question is designed to draw attention to the writing and to its effect on the reader. It thus helps candidates to address AO3 (language, structure and form) and AO4 (an informed personal response). 'Personal response' should, for strong candidates, be personal response to the writing and not to the imagined situation.

It follows that a good answer always moves beyond a paraphrase of the narrative of the text. A well-supported narrative account of the poem or passage, illustrated by quotation, can achieve a good Band 6 mark; but to move beyond this level there must be engagement with the writer's purpose, and how this is communicated to the reader.

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Attention to the writer's language, style and purpose immediately takes a candidate's response further than the surface literal meaning of the text, allowing interpretation of possible figurative meaning. This is also a key strand in the Assessment Objectives for English Literature, involving exploration 'beyond surface meaning' (AO2). Answers at Band 4 and above are expected to address the text's 'deeper implications', so it is essential to delve further than the surface narrative and comment on the effect on the reader. Good candidates analyse the effects of language choices and the best candidates evaluate the overall impact of texts, both through sensitive response to detail and critical appreciation of their overall and cumulative effect. Responses awarded Band 2 and above therefore need to address the writer's purpose critically, and understand genre; showing sustained engagement with how the text works and with why it achieves an interesting and memorable effect.

It was good to note a high number of responses showing thoroughness of response to language, and an increasing number demonstrated the kind of independent critical engagement with both the writing and the power of its impact on the individual reader which makes this component so satisfying to study, teach and indeed examine. The variety and individuality of responses is a pleasure, and it is equally rewarding to see how key skills for success as critical readers of Literature are becoming so firmly embedded among the candidature for this paper.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This passage was taken from Simon Armitage's modern version of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Although we do not set or study texts in translation in this syllabus, we have used modern poetic versions of older texts: Ted Hughes's *Tales from Ovid* has been set in the past, for instance. This famous passage of the narrative poem was certainly dramatic enough to engage the candidates' interest, and no prior knowledge of the text, legend or even the idea of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table was expected or assumed. The focus of the question, as always, was on the qualities of the writing and their immediate impact on the reader. Most were able to understand the surface narrative, however mysterious they found the words and identity of the Green Knight. Several intelligently suggested his colour linked him to nature, many believed him supernatural, and some thought he was a ghost. The writer never fully clarifies these matters, so all answers, if supported, are valid. Some struggled with the later parts of the narrative, and thought it was Sir Gawain who mounted the horse and paraded the head of the Green Man; those who did not realise that the Green Knight had been beheaded and yet continued to walk and ride, while remaining silent and defiant, found it hard to demonstrate clear overall understanding. Some candidates showed appreciation of the creation of humour, while many gave voice to the expression of horror. Good answers considered the ironic tone of both the narrator and the Green Knight, drawing inferences from this.

Most candidates had little difficulty in locating horror, exploring the brutal nature of the beheading and the apparently callous and cruel atmosphere of the court in this extract. The descriptions of physical violence and the hints of the supernatural and macabre were carefully explored. It was also pleasing to see that the majority had no difficulty in locating dark humour and irony, whether in the Green Knight's sardonic tone or the ironic turn of events. Many quickly noticed how irrational the Knight's request to be beheaded was, and how confident he appeared to be that he would survive, and rightly concluded that he was not entirely human. However, a little more comment on the text as a poem, with a closer look at alliteration, rhythm and diction would have been welcome. Only a small number of candidates looked at the effect of the shorter 'bob-and-wheel' lines at the end of each stanza, and the ways in which they provided a close-up of the action and a more intense description of the atmosphere. The creation of anticipation is an important element of narrative poetry, and is especially masterly in this extract.

Using the bullet points, many candidates divided their responses into the preparation for the decapitation, the event itself, and its aftermath. This chronological sequence worked well, as long as they addressed both horrific and humorous elements. The Knight's confidence is both provocative and ominous, and many noticed the irony of his promise to divulge his identity after Gawain had beheaded him. Many commented on how phrases such as 'smite me smartly' and 'show your striking style' suggested that he is mocking Gawain rather than reflecting the horror of the moment, and that his bravery and attitude in the face of 'that gruesome

axe' seemed super-human. More might have been made of his deliberate provocations and a touch of cowardice: 'loafing and lounging', 'But / you stall!' and the way in which he seeks to undermine the King, Gawain and his comrades.

Most analysed the realism and horror of the beheading itself with intelligent skill and attention to detail. They contrasted the vulnerability of 'the nape of his neck now naked and ready' with the way he prepares for the blow 'in the standing position', and heaps his hair to prepare the way. Some speculated about the 'flash of green flesh' which is revealed: is he dead and rotting? Supernatural? A force of nature? All of these are possibilities the original writer hints at here, and addresses further later on in the poem (without ever entirely answering them). There was strong commentary on the violence of the blow itself: how Gawain 'heaves' the heavy axe, needs to plant his 'left foot firmly', and then 'swings it swiftly'. Several found it ironic that he is described as swinging the axe 'heavenwards' in what seems such a brutal and hellish scene. Most noted the coldness of the clinical detail which describes the surgical severing of the Knight's spine as Gawain 'parted the fat and the flesh' like a skilled butcher, and again the word 'cleanness' was explored as an ironic counterpoint to a bloody scene. A discriminator among stronger scripts was the ability to comment in some detail on how the 'blade took a bite from the floor', not only spotting the personification but also explaining why it is so disconcerting for the reader.

The aftermath of the beheading received detailed attention, even from those less certain about what was actually happening. Many contrasted the horror of 'blood gutters brightly' with the use of the word 'tumbles' to describe the journey of the disturbingly 'handsome' head. Plenty commented on the dark humour of the moment when the relieved 'king's men' play football with the severed head. This moment certainly elicited a range of interesting personal responses. The power of the Knight was understood by those who commented on diction such as 'tree-trunk legs', 'trudges' and 'rummages': they reveal that he is a huge force of nature, and unstoppable. The sinister ease of the sibilance as he 'strides', 'snatches', 'steps' and 'swings', all without the aid of a head, was noted by the strongest candidates. Some felt, appropriately, that his ability to regenerate was a quality of his closeness to nature, which they contrasted with the effete and callous decadence of the King's court 'deadened now with dread'. Many strong responses commented on the irony of this final line, as it is the courtiers who seem dead, not the Knight. As one candidate amusingly put it: 'the Knight keeps his head in every sense'.

Some candidates struggled a little with the use of slang, even though they are helped with this in the footnote. Phrases such as 'cops hold of his head' and 'never mind minus his head' were not always understood as humorous. Armitage successfully reproduces and updates the distinctively Northern element of the Gawain poet's Englishness; it was pleasing to see the ways in which a text over 500 years-old came alive for the candidates, and stimulated them to engage with both the story itself and the way it was told, exploring language and the deeper implications of this disturbing yet entertaining scene.

Question 2

The passage from Alan Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child* was a far more contemporary piece of writing, presenting a teenage girl's experience and point of view while nevertheless having a period feel. Set in England just before the First World War, this part of Hollinghurst's novel concerns an upper middle class milieu familiar to readers of E. M. Forster, and his style parodies Forster's, as well as the aesthetic crush experienced by an impressionable young woman. As young Daphne herself only partly understands what she sees and feels (and is slightly intoxicated by alcohol as well as the presence of the romantic young poet Cecil), it was not expected that candidates would have a completely clear impression of the relationships portrayed. The intention of the question was that candidates should concentrate on Daphne's viewpoint and feelings, and the impact of this moment on her: discovering the boys in the hammock, hearing the romantic music and wanting to experience a moment of transgression, but feeling disappointment and regret afterwards.

This passage proved to be less popular than the poem, but it attracted many strong and detailed responses. Many used the bullet points to shape their responses and paid careful attention to different parts of the narrative, but this should always be done with the stem question clearly borne in mind. Daphne's attitudes and observations needed to be at the heart of the answer. Most noticed that her interest is clearly in Cecil: she asks for him 'artfully', used his name 'fondly' and wants to be included by the boys, agreeing to smoke the cigar in order to impress them. Many commented on her befuddled senses 'startled and amused by her own tipsiness', although some were distracted into articulating their own dislike of drunkenness or smoking, rather than exploring the significance of these details as an element of the writing. In the passage, the drink contributes to the sense of confusion and heightened sensory awareness, and the cigar is clearly signalled as a source of 'faint devilish' temptation. Good candidates were able to make such deductions by exploring language and implication throughout the passage.

The play of lightness and dark in the hammock is important in establishing the nature of Daphne's feelings for Cecil. Good candidates noticed the 'shadowed gleam' of his face, momentarily lit up by the cigar, which is tantalisingly attractive yet elusive for Daphne. The sinister cigar, a 'dimly luminous bug', is amusingly contrasted by good candidates with Daphne's more childish memories of the hammock, and her desire to 'tip them out' or 'climb in with them', while at the same time feeling this was some 'new game' from which she was excluded. Most candidates could empathise with her infatuation, desire to be grown up, mixed feelings, and later regret and sense of disappointment.

Most engaged with the sibling rivalry between Daphne and George, although some commented very disapprovingly on his failure to protect her from temptation, or mischievous desire to let her make a fool of herself. Some confused George's lines with Cecil's, though Hollinghurst makes it very clear who is speaking, and candidates preparing for this paper should certainly be familiar with the conventions of dialogue from their work on Set Prose Texts. Stronger scripts contrasted George's 'paradoxical tone' and chortling with Daphne's 'pained and tantalized' feelings.

Attention to the second bullet point, and the symbolic element in the descriptions of the music, distinguished the more accomplished responses. 'Wild and intense', it was rightly seen in these answers as representing the more adult feelings which Daphne yearns to express; 'full of yearning and defiance' and with 'the heightened effect of beauty encountered in an unexpected setting'. This desire to be taken seriously or to defy expectations extends to her interest in the cigar, and the desire to join the boys' game instead of 'missing a chance at it'. Some very strong scripts were able to connect Daphne's yearnings with the 'mad girl in love with a man' in the song, who is 'under a curse and can only be redeemed by a woman's love'. By tracking the connections between the song and Daphne's behaviour, these candidates were better able to understand her disappointment later in the passage.

The best responses had a sense of the overall shape of the narrative, and that Daphne's smoking of the cigar was both the climax and anti-climax of the scene. They were able to see how her romantic yearnings and fantasies contrast with the reality, both her own immaturity (which peeps out when she sees the boys reminding her of 'her parents sitting up in bed') and the disappointment of her moment of rebellion. The cigar symbolises this contrast. Many appreciated the attraction of 'something none of her friends had done', and stronger responses commented feelingly on how repetition emphasises 'shame and duty and regret' to show how unwilling her submission really is. The cigar is described as 'the thing', from her point of view, and it makes her do something 'unladylike' which even George appears to feel some remorse about. Strong scripts saw that perhaps it was not just the cigar which Daphne 'wanted out of her system', and a pleasing number of candidates appreciated the significance of the final line, linking and contrasting the cigar and the music, by juxtaposing the singer's 'noble ignorance' and 'Daphne's behaviour'. Those candidates who kept a strong focus on Daphne and her emotions produced the strongest answers. Some realised that Cecil's comments on the song are as cynical as the way he offers her the cigar, and suggest he is not really the man for her.

Whilst weaker responses tended to focus largely on description, they showed reasonable understanding of the surface narrative and began to explore what might be implied by the young girl's yearnings and disappointments. Stronger scripts showed the ability to tackle symbolism in the narrative, made careful selection and comparison of details from the writing, and addressed the writer's style and development of ironic contrasts between fantasy and more bitter reality. When writing about prose passages it is impossible to make a close reading entirely exhaustive, so good answers are distinguished by the ability to make judicious selections and to communicate a sense of the style and shape of the whole extract, and the journey the principal character makes. The best responses in this session offered sustained engagement with the writing, and make very clear how the writer sympathetically presented Daphne's longings and rebellious inclinations whilst simultaneously mocking them; several noted the subtle sexual nuances hinted at in both her feelings of desire and regret. Most candidates certainly understood that Daphne's magnetic attraction to Cecil was not reciprocated, and were able to identify with her adolescent wish to be taken more seriously. Many were able to explore hints of disenchantment and loss of innocence. Some justifiably felt that Daphne's sense of guilt or disapproval was itself a sign of her immaturity. It was certainly pleasing to read such a variety of personal responses strongly grounded in engagement with the writer's language, and its range of possible implications.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33

Unseen

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candidates should beware of concentrating exclusively on the narrative and how it unfolds: good responses also address the writer's use of description, the drama of dialogue and its effect, and the creative use of narrative voice or point-of-view. These are the prose writer's tools, and without an analytical approach to them, it is difficult for responses to prose to match the complexity of what candidates can achieve in writing about poetry.

Attention to the writer's language, style and purpose immediately takes a candidate's response further than the surface literal meaning of the text, allowing interpretation of possible figurative meaning. This is also a key strand in the Assessment Objectives for English Literature, involving exploration 'beyond surface meaning' (AO2). Answers at Band 4 and above are expected to address the text's 'deeper implications', so it is essential to delve further than the surface narrative and comment on the effect on the reader. Good candidates analyse the effects of language choices and the best candidates evaluate the overall impact of texts, both through sensitive response to detail and critical appreciation of their overall and cumulative effect. Responses awarded Band 2 and above therefore need to address the writer's purpose critically, and understand genre; showing sustained engagement with how the text works and with why it achieves an interesting and memorable effect.

It was good to note a high number of responses showing thoroughness of response to language, and an increasing number demonstrated the kind of independent critical engagement with both the writing and the power of its impact on the individual reader which makes this component so satisfying to study, teach and indeed examine. The variety and individuality of responses is a pleasure, and it is equally rewarding to see how key skills for success as critical readers of Literature are becoming so firmly embedded among the candidature for this paper.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Robert Minhinnick's poem 'Surfers' describes his observations watching men and women riding the surf at Porthcawl, where he lives, in the evening as the sun goes down: he is a surfer himself and this one of several poems on similar subject matter. Philip Gross has written 'if the strength of the voice, its assertive distinctiveness, is your measure of a poet, then Minhinnick is your man'. It was very pleasing to see the ways in which candidates in this paper responded to that strong and distinctive voice, and engaged with the poem's descriptive powers and reflection on physical activity. The bullet points encouraged candidates to look at the poem sequentially, stanza by stanza, but strong answers also responded to the poem as a whole and the invitation in the question to consider the meaning of the surfers' experience, and why it makes such a strong impression on the poet. Unfortunately, a few misread the question and took it to refer to how experienced the surfers are, or are not, and spent more time on the technical abilities of the surfers than those of the poet, and on the surfers' actions rather than the feelings they experienced and how the poet interprets them.

The poem proved accessible in some way to all the candidates, although many found the first stanza the most difficult. Most were able to comment on the joy of the young people 'grinning like dolphins', and many were able to comment on the aptness of the simile as a description of the surfers in their wetsuits and their play in the water. Some were puzzled by the description of a Northern Hemisphere sunset in September, and thought they were surfing in the dark; while others produced rather laboured ecological readings, taking the image of 'an industrial sunset oiling the sea' over-literally, as an indication of pollution rather than the quasi-phosphorescent effect of the evening light. This led to some rather leaden ecological readings about tanker-spillage and industrial environmental vandalism. Similarly some read the image of the 'surf-rider swept / Suddenly onto this table of dark sand' too literally, and did not make enough use of the footnotes. These glossed the more technical vocabulary in order to help the reader picture the scene. The footnotes are always intended to help candidates understand the surface meaning of the text, and clear up areas where meaning might prove unintentionally ambiguous. They should then use this understanding to explore the implications of detail. Good answers saw a pattern of darkening imagery ('industrial' ... 'oiling' ... 'dark' ... 'moraine'), and were able to link this to later images of stolen moments to appreciate the fragility of these fleeting pleasures for the surfers. The verb 'swept' already suggests the fragility and passivity of the surfers in the face of the tide.

While the first stanza already offered a range of deeper implications, the emphasis of the second on physical activity made it the most attractive to candidates. Most noted the battle imagery in 'conflict' and sensed this was a fight humans could only momentarily win. Those who focused on the 'flimsy' nature of the boards, and the 'perilous' nature of the excitement saw the experience of the surfers in the same way as the poet. Good

responses saw the progression from 'lifts' to 'the summit', and understood how language conveys the aspirations of the surfers in search of excitement. Fewer were able to connect the surfers' movements to the ebb and flow of the verse itself, and the use of line-endings to show the surfers briefly poised at the height of a wave before somersaulting down. It would be good if more were able to recognise the way in which lineation can also achieve a 'moment of flight'. Candidates need to practise linking the patterns and movements of the verse to what poems describe, rather than simply identifying similes, 'enjambment', alliteration etc. without comment on the effect of these techniques. The notion of transitory joy, however, was well understood, as was the movement from conflict to mastery to exhaustion. It was appreciated that the surfers are brought down both literally and metaphorically as the breaking tide returns them to earth. One candidate connected the domestic imagery of 'table of dark sand' to 'roofs of water' to suggest that the surfers felt entirely at home in this environment.

In the third stanza the imagery of 'flight' and the gliding surfers achieving instinctive mastery proved fruitful for well-focused candidates. Some noted that the surfers were 'like driftwood' and would inevitably be returned to 'the coastline's low moraine', their 'mastery' a temporary illusion. Here strong answers did examine enjambment, the poet's choice of line breaks and the effect of the long final sentence, which presents the 'untouchable' moment and the exhausted 'creep' back as part of the same movement. Good responses also followed up the question's hint to consider the first-person observer, not participating in all this activity but commenting on it. They explored ways in which his language expresses awe, fascination and a hint of irony. A few felt he was expressing disapproval of human engagement with nature, but these perhaps missed the joyous energy with which he describes the surfers' engagement with the waves. Others noted his wry awareness that their dominance is a form of theft, and explored the choice of words such as 'creep', 'exhausted', 'winching' and 'stolen' to describe the surfers' return. No longer sharing the instincts of the dolphins, they are restored to their fragile humanity. This poem was a test of the ability to engage with complex, and to some degree contradictory emotions and images, as the final phrase 'won, or stolen' suggests, and it was the ability to reflect this poised ambivalence which marked out the stronger answers. Plenty of candidates were able to appreciate the joy of the stolen moments and the 'discriminate / Steps of thieves' as the surfers gingerly returned to the real world and the darkening sea shore.

Question 2

Suspense and sustained tension are the characteristic effects of this fine piece of descriptive writing from John le Carré's early novel, *A Murder of Quality*. The pacing of this passage, seen entirely from the investigator's point of view, steadily builds up unease and fear, and then releases it in an unexpected (and, here, not entirely explained) way. The effect on the reader comes through our engagement with the point of view of the (normally phlegmatic) protagonist. The question asked candidates to be aware of this, and of the ways in which the writer uses a third-person limited narrative perspective. Candidates will be better prepared for the prose question if they are used to considering the different choices writers make over narrative voice and point of view, as these are often the first issues authors themselves need to resolve before writing. Here, the context of the detective story and investigation are less significant than the ways in which the desolation and loneliness of the winter scene create an eerie feeling, making the narrator hypersensitive to noises and detail. The rubric informed candidates that this was the scene of the crime, which helps to explain Smiley's fear of this dark, lonely and uneasy place. However, the 'childish' character who greets him at the end turns out not to be the murderer. Candidates were not to know this, and some felt that this was the killer, some the victim's ghost – such deductions were not invalid if supported by close reference to the text.

What Examiners were looking for was not a narrative account, but an exploration of the ways in which the writing brings Smiley's viewpoint to life. Successful candidates therefore maintained a tight focus on Smiley (and thus on the question) throughout. We only see what he sees, share his fears, and have no more knowledge than he has. Good scripts focused on how alert his senses are to every detail of the sinister winter landscape, the lonely house and the garden path leading up to the conservatory. Many brought out the contrast between the dark, narrow shadowy environs of the house and the 'untrodden' white fields. There was an appreciation of the words which brought out implications of claustrophobia, secrecy and obscurity. Some made much, perhaps too much, of the 'contrived Gothic script' of the house sign, but the passage does use the conventions of horror, although it also frustrates them through its generally rational tone. Phrases such as 'straggling willow wands' and 'furtive rustle of laden hedge' were investigated in stronger scripts, and seen as giving a secret and hostile life to the nature that is closing in around the investigator. The isolation and 'chill' become increasingly ominous, and the scene strikes him as 'ugly' and 'gaunt'. Every aspect of the house seems to deter visitors and conceal secrets. Good candidates paid attention to the writer's use of personification or the symbolism of the 'abundant ivy'.

Some noticed that sentences become shorter and more breathlessly tense in the second paragraph as Smiley feels fear long before he meets or sees anything to be afraid of – indeed the end of the passage feels like something of an anti-climax. Stronger responses located this moment of fear precisely, and showed that the candidate had paid attention to the rubric and was aware of the conservatory as the scene of the murder. The writer's use of ellipsis and the repetition of 'afraid...afraid' received sensitive and detailed attention. Weaker candidates, in contrast, spent too long on descriptive details without relating them to Smiley's point of view, often confused the character and the author, drifted into paraphrase, or spent too long on the first bullet point. The fear really comes as Smiley realises he is retracing the murderer's path, and how his knowledge is 'like an awareness of pain'. It is not really fear of a ghost or anyone present, but of the sadness of the surroundings. Many candidates picked up the striking simile of the ivy reaching towards him 'like an old woman cosseting an unwilling child', some linking this to the female character at the end of the passage. The best answers saw that he has become over-sensitised to his surroundings and that his 'terror' is at something which is not there: the real woman does not really scare him at all, indeed she seems more 'like a child' and was scared of him. Good candidates were alert to these shifts in pace, tension and focus, and to the overall structure of the passage.

Good answers showed that candidates were perfectly able to avoid rushing to judgement about the woman, instead paying thoughtful attention, as the question asked, to the *effect* of her sudden appearance; the way she has her back to him as if concealing something, her quirky behaviour, unusual voice and puzzling line of dialogue. Smiley is described as 'forgetting his fear', and is puzzled and not unsympathetic. Stronger responses explored how the description of the house and the shadows hiding in its 'abundant ivy' metamorphose into the sudden appearance of the woman and Smiley's panic, and 'one concerted cry of terror, where sight and sound and touch could no longer be distinguished in the frenzy of his brain'. They appreciated that the passage showed an investigator's rationality overwhelmed by the ways in which the senses and an involuntary feeling of the supernatural merge into one. The clarity of the description of the woman, with her gentle movements and 'childish lilt', made it, in contrast, a deliberate anti-climax. A pleasing number of strong candidates were able to identify elements of clichéd horror writing, but also the ways in which the narrative perspective and sense of irony and reason undermine those expectations. Others, however, felt the 'dramatic and disturbing' had to be the appearance of a ghost, but found it harder to support their reading with textual evidence from the later paragraphs.

Good responses to prose show detailed and sensitive awareness of the writer's choices and of their impact on the reader. Personal response and interpretation is therefore reinforced by analysis of the writer's language and style. Preparation of candidates for this kind of question should focus not just on the writer's tools but also on what he does with them. Above all, stronger candidates move beyond the surface narrative and ask themselves questions about the narrative point-of view, and the sympathies and feelings of the reader as they track the principal character. This passage proved to have plenty of descriptive detail to engage the analytical skills of most candidates; the best had a sense of the direction both of the extract and of their own responses to it, and were able to evaluate how its shock effects work, and what they suggest to the reader.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41

Set Texts: Closed Books-A

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- Showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text.
- Ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question.
- Maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract.
- Using a well-structured and developed argument.
- Supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared for the examination; knowledge of the texts was generally good, and most knew how to structure their answers and showed evidence of planning. Most candidates made appropriate question choices, though weaker candidates sometimes chose empathic questions that enabled them to show some knowledge and understanding, but not in a reasonably appropriate voice. When such candidates attempted a passage-based or essay question, they often fared better than in the empathic questions.

There were relatively few examples of rubric infringements and of the 'final answer syndrome' where it is obvious that time has run out and the final answer is much briefer and sketchier than the previous ones. In a few cases, candidates had written very lengthy plans, crossed them out and written almost identical final drafts. This is a waste of time in examination conditions and should be discouraged.

Overall there seemed to be a general understanding of meaning / ideas in the texts and a largely conscientious response to questions (even those responding in simple narrative); but only the most successful answers engaged with the language on a deeper level. Some candidates answer a question in less than a page. Although we are looking for quality rather than quantity, perhaps candidates need to be advised that, at the level at which they are working the texts they are studying have been chosen for their depth, and that questions are designed to be searching and to elicit quite a lot more material.

In general candidates used their knowledge of the texts judiciously, constructed convincing arguments and illustrated them with apt quotations. The most successful went on to explore in detail the effects of language and imagery, and showed awareness of the authors' intentions. The best answers showed a close engagement with the texts and a real enjoyment of the books studied.

The point must be made that the words 'How' and 'In what ways' and 'explore' are specific indicators to candidates that more than narrative is required; that the main consideration is writer's method, and that the reinforcing words like 'memorably', 'vividly', 'strikingly' are also directed to consideration of the use of language. It is strongly recommended that teachers should make learners aware of the importance of these terms, and of the necessity to use them as the focus of their responses. Similarly the word 'significant' is one that candidates need to be familiar with, since it directs them to consideration of the function of a particular aspect of the text.

Lack of consideration of these words was particularly evident in some of the poetry answers. Whereas some candidates responded with enthusiasm and critical awareness to the poems selected, others seemed

somewhat at sea and had difficulty in articulating anything beyond rough 'translations' or paraphrases of the poems. Sometimes they showed an awareness that they needed to explore the effect of language, but they did this by means of general personal responses, describing how something made them feel rather than examining the way in which the poet creates an effect. It was good to see that there was less 'spotting' and no particularly 'fashionable' critical term this session, but there was a continuing tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be used instead of words which identify effects precisely.

Similarly there was a lack of really close reading of the extracts in some weaker answers to the * questions. Every session the Principal Examiner's Report comments on the necessity for candidates to give more than narrative run-throughs and to look analytically at the language used. Furthermore, the whole of the extract is important; it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for the discussion. Though there is not usually a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it and it is easy to detect a lack of knowledge of the whole text.

Empathic questions generated some of the higher-scoring responses, with several assuming a credible voice; that said, some responses in this category produced narrowly focused answers, often ignoring broader aspects of the character or their significance in the play / novel. Most candidates knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question.

In the past, it has been commented that the sense of drama is underdeveloped in responses to the plays on the papers and this continues to be a concern. For example, the best answers to questions on *Julius Caesar* showed an understanding of the visual qualities of the scene, and of the dynamics between the characters, as well as responding to changes in tone and mood. Weaker answers merely gave run-throughs of the passages. Though it is appreciated that not all candidates will be able to see plays in production, the acting of scenes in class is an important tool in developing this sense. Too often candidates refer to plays as 'books', revealing that they see them only as words on a page.

There was some poorly presented work this session, thankfully a minority, with handwriting that was very difficult to decipher. Candidates do themselves a disservice if they do not take pride in their work, and chaotic presentation often reflects a lack of coherence in the answer.

There follow notes on all the texts indicating some of the ideas that candidates might have used in their answers. They are not intended to be seen as templates for perfect answers; any relevant ideas that were supported from the text were credited. There are also indications of what candidates did particularly well and areas in which they were not quite so successful.

SECTION A: DRAMA

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

There are number of things which might be thought revealing, such as the relationship between Biff and Happy, moments of tension between Biff and his father, and the fact that Linda is pushed to the side in any discussion. Willy shows unusual scepticism, only to be followed by a rapid mood swing and the building of what are manifestly castles in the air. This was a very popular question from a very popular text, but there were a lot of one-dimensional and one-solution answers. Many answers made little attempt to consider what 'revealing' might mean, or tried to specify what it was that might be revealed and were merely paraphrases of what happens in the scene, often taken very literally (Biff is going to get a job, Willy is helping his son by telling him how to behave). There were also some generalisations about the American Dream and how it is (or, occasionally, is not) going to be achieved by the Lomans. However, even weaker answers usually demonstrated a good understanding of Linda's supportive role. Some candidates fixed on the ideas of Willy's obsession with money, or his pursuit of the American dream, and asserted that the extract 'revealed' these themes, even though we have long been aware of them. They gathered evidence in support, usually including the lines 'That is a one-million dollar idea' and 'Ask for fifteen'. Many candidates identified what the scene *shows*: Willy being rude to Linda, changing his mind and mood, giving advice to Biff; Linda being submissive; Biff making allusions to the woman in the hotel in Boston; Happy coming up with a new idea (though most candidates overlooked Happy altogether). More successful answers recognized this is a *family* scene, and that its revelatory aspects concern the dynamics of the family. It is something of a make-or-break scene: the last chance for Willy's values to be put into practice. These candidates noted the enthusiasm of everyone – even Linda and Biff, who we would expect to be more cautious. They are all carried away by the

excitement. The scene thus reveals the family to be acting as one, that their cohesion is important to them. Some candidates saw clearly that the Loman family have been here before many times, and that they have learned nothing. The scene reveals the triumph of hope over experience.

Question 2

Howard Wagner may be thought to be a totally unfeeling person who can only see in Willy a tiresome and useless employee, only interested in himself and his profits with no sense of loyalty to his employees, and still a boy in love with gadgets and the new consumer society. On the other hand he has actually indulged Willy for some time, despite the fact that he has not for a long while justified a salary, and might be now entitled to call it a day to preserve the health of his company. This question was generally done well by the candidates who attempted it. There was some variation between answers, although the ones with a positive view of Howard tended to adopt the approach that he was just doing the best for his business and thus missed much of the point of the play. The answers more critical of Howard were generally more engaged with the play's concerns. It was relatively easy to find nothing to admire, to write Howard Wagner off as a cold and narrow, and boorishly enthusiastic about gadgetry. They could note his insensitivity in recommending to Willie a luxury product costing \$150. Better answers took a more nuanced view of the interview with Willy. They argued that Howard had realized a long time ago that Willy was no longer an asset to the firm, but had put off the day when he had to do something about it. Now that Willie has brought the matter to the fore, Howard is evasive, not brutal. The tape-recorder is merely a distraction to delay the dreaded moment when the axe must fall. Though the question did not require it, candidates might have found it useful to compare him with Charley, who does not wonder where Willie can fit into his business. He does not drop him because he is not useful and there is no place for him. Instead he offers to take him on without even thinking of what he would do. He'd just give him a job 'for the hell of it.'

Question 3

Charley is likely to be thinking that Biff's priorities are wrong, that sporting prowess is not as important as he and Willy think it is, that he is likely to fail maths with far reaching consequences, and that his faint disdain for his son Bernard is likely to be very much misplaced. This question was very popular. Better answers were quite well-engaged with the situation and sometimes the details of Charley's and Bernard's characters, while weaker answers repeated what happens to Biff in the play with a few general remarks about how much better Bernard was. Many responses suffered from hindsight. In the end, Bernard made good by working hard in School; therefore candidates had Charley thinking that Biff needs to get cracking on his maths, and he looks forward to the day when accolades will fall on his own son. There was only rare mention of the fact that Charley is more worried at this moment about Biff's stealing. Good answers created a convincing voice for Charley, incorporating quite a number of his idiosyncrasies of speech.

Julius Caesar

Question 4

This is Cassius's first approach to Brutus following the initial appearance of Julius Caesar. It is a dramatic and significant moment because of Brutus's uncertainties – he is idealistic, yet feeling fear and unease regarding Caesar. Cassius's persuasiveness and his anxiety to get Brutus on side build up a powerful sense of tension. Many candidates showed a competent grasp of the importance of the scene, though they could have made more of the fact that this occurs so early in the play. There were very few answers that explored the power and emotion of Cassius's speeches, and the way in which he is able to exploit even the tiniest openings that Brutus gives.

Question 5

Areas for consideration might be Casca's report of the slave with the hand on fire, the bird of night etc., Caesar's reliance on the auguries, Artemidorus, 'Beware the Ides of March' and Caesar's ghost. This was not a particularly popular question, but those candidates who attempted it generally showed good knowledge of the text and a clear understanding of the significance of the various events.

Question 6

Cassius might be thinking about his argument with Brutus and his general demeanour, about the injustice of the accusations levelled against him, and about Portia and the manner of the revelation of her death. He will be worried about what will happen now – the battle is looming. It is a long scene, starting with the quarrel, then breaking the news of Portia's death, which contributes to the reconciliation, and then discussing the

tactics for the coming battle at Philippi - so when Cassius leaves Brutus's tent he has a lot to say. Candidates who made Cassius do no more than grieve largely denied themselves the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the play.

The Tempest

Question 7

The opening lines address a range of superhuman agencies which Prospero has enlisted to help in his exercise of magical power. The extent of that power makes its renunciation even more telling, and may be seen by some candidates as changing their perception of Prospero's character. His subsequent comments to the assembled royal group as they gradually regain their senses have the effect of a judicial summing up. Candidates might have commented on the visual aspect of the scene, with the spectacle of the initially transfixed characters changing into wakefulness. The whole extract provides a sense of an ending in which loose ends are tied up and order is restored. The question explicitly calls for examination of the language. This was marginally more popular than the essay question on the play. Many answers were disappointing, providing little more than a few generalisations about how powerful Prospero is. A few answers noticed the opening focus on his power over the natural world, and a very few commented on the change from magic powers to the much greater human power of forgiveness.

Question 8

Miranda and Ferdinand fall in love at first sight. Her innocence and inexperience make her susceptible to Ferdinand, but his feelings for her are presented as pure and sincere. The conversation between the two in Act 3 Scene 1 may prove a good source of material for exploring the initial establishment of this relationship. Prospero's interventions in the course of the relationship may also be considered as a way of exploring the 'moving' aspect of the question. Candidates might have contrasted the innocence of their relationship with the behaviour of other characters in the play. At best, most answers provided a summary of how Miranda and Ferdinand met and subsequently behaved in the play, with a few comments about their personal characteristics. Some very good answers were able to investigate how the relationship is both moving in itself and a crucial part of the play in terms of theme and concerns, beyond its significance for the plot.

Question 9

Antonio is an inveterate conspirator with an eye to the main chance. Although he may well be exasperated at the frustration of this plan, he will not abandon his ambitions. He may well have some comment to make about Sebastian and his complicity in the plan, and he may well be thinking of the advantage that could accrue to him if the plan comes to effect. Very few examples of responses to this question were seen.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

The audience may well be intrigued by what is to happen to the romance of Jack and Gwendolen given what passes between them and what will ensue from Gwendolen being given Jack's country address, Algernon's writing down the address on his shirt cuff, and his subsequent remarks to Lane and his attitude to Jack. Candidates wondered how Jack would resolve the problem of his real name, after Gwendolen reveals that she is hopelessly enamoured by the name of Ernest, or how they will overcome Lady Bracknell's objections. Then Jack tells Gwendolen his address, and Algernon smiles to himself, writes the address on his shirt cuff, and picks up the handy Bradshaw. Clearly he is up to something, and we wonder what. A lot of candidates tended to ignore the actual question, and concentrate instead on summarising what happened in the extract. A pity, as most had a working understanding of the context / implications of what was happening. Very few responded to Algernon's 'smiling to himself' or his later 'laughing' and final 'smiles'. A few answers showed good understanding of the ironic and satirical elements of the scene, and analysed Algernon's eavesdropping and plans in the light of his character.

Question 11

Some of the things which make Lady Bracknell so memorably amusing are her trenchant mode of address, her outrageous views and the fear she creates, her assumption that everyone will do as she demands since she is older than most and wiser than all, and her ultimate failure to organise anyone to do anything which she expects. The few candidates who attempted this question produced answers which commented on a limited range of aspects of Lady Bracknell's character and role in the play, but were generally unable to

respond to the cue words 'memorably amusing'. One very good one answer looked not only at the dialogue in detail and depth, but also considered her part in Wilde's satirical purpose, and the irony by the gap between her own ideas of her importance and her actual powers in the play.

Question 12

Lane appears to feel infinitely superior to his supposed master, rather like Jeeves of a later generation. He may well be thinking that little good can come of it, about the disaster which he implies was his own attempt at matrimony, pessimistically about a household run by young Cecily, and grimly about the way his perks in the way of good champagne are likely to end.

SECTION B: POETRY

There are many ways of interpreting a poem; there follow a few ideas that the poems in question might suggest. Any ideas that could be supported were credited, and answers which explored the imagery and show sensitivity to the music of the poetry gained high reward.

Alfred Lord Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

Question 13

The loneliness of Mariana's life is conveyed by the description of the isolation of the moated grange ('the level waste') and the black water of the moat, the wind and the ghostliness of the house, and the sense of past occupants. The use of repetition in the refrain and the way in which the rhyme scheme places emphasis on particular words build to a crescendo of despair.

Question 14

The intensity of Tennyson's grief at Hallam's death and its different stages convey the strength of the friendship. He idealises Hallam and the difficulty in living without him, and it takes a great deal of time for him to move on. The imagery conveys the different phases and answers needed to focus on 'movingly', and to move beyond explanation and description to engage with the feeling of the poem selected.

Question 15

The nature of the pain and suffering in either poem needed to be explored – the speaker's grief and anguish at the death of Maud, the loneliness and domination by the curse in *The Lady of Shalott* – and the way in which the setting reinforces the feelings of the characters. The language and imagery are central: the gothic image of being buried alive in *Maud*, and the contrast between the sterility of the castle in *The Lady of Shalott* and the vibrancy and colour of what lies outside it. The way in which the rhyme and rhythm reinforce the feelings also needed comment.

Songs Of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

The emphasis in the question is on a sense of menace, and candidates needed to shape their comments to address this. The poem is full of rich imagery, and the diction can be explored and commented on, e.g., 'tigering', 'malevolent', 'horror'. Candidates might have commented on the horrific image of the cannibalism of pike, and / or the sense of fear aroused in the poet by the night-fishing experience, and also on the repeated numerical references to size, weight, time. It is a long poem and they were not expected to be exhaustive in their answers. This question was generally handled more successfully than the other poetry questions, and there were some very analytical and responsive answers. Even the weakest answers tended to have a reasonable understanding of the viciousness of the fish.

Question 17

In *The City Planners* the activities of the planners seem to attempt to achieve a permanence and stability to life which the poet appears to suggest is ultimately futile. Candidates needed to look closely at details such as the way the diction in the first part of the poem contrasts with that later on, and that diction relating to order and rationality contrasts with that relating to disorder and chaos (e.g. 'sanities', 'pedantic', 'rational' as opposed to 'hysteria', 'insane', 'panic'). In *The Planners* the language of the poem connotes order and conformity, but the poet's comments on nature ('the sea', 'the skies') and time ('history', 'fossils') suggest a

hostile feeling about city life. This was also a very popular question, with most of the answers focusing on Boey Kim Cheng rather than the Atwood, and quite a few mistakenly writing about both. The answers were the less diverse, with candidates able to pick out some details to support an account of the poet's general distaste for suburban life and 'the government'. The responses to *The Planners* were more varied, with some really well-considered answers which thoroughly engaged with both the ideas in the poem and their poetic expression. There were, inevitably, also some answers which took the poem at face value as a rousing endorsement of the success of modern urban planning. The answers in between were variable in their ability to explore language and investigate attitudes, the weaker ones hampered by an inability to read beyond the city–nature opposition in the first stanza. Better answers, of course, recognised the irony, the sarcasm and scorn in both poems. A few very good answers saw that the attitudes went deeper than mere disapproval. Boey Kim Cheng has in effect given up. The planners are unstoppable, and have conquered the sky, the sea, even history. They have erased everything, even memory. The poem is despairing. Margaret Atwood, by contrast, has hope. There is mischievous glee in her voice as she contemplates the houses subsiding and collapsing, and nature reclaiming its own.

Question 18

The question is specifically about the sounds of the words: rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, repetition, sibilance, consonance, assonance, but more than identification of poetic devices was required; comments needed to be linked to the *effects* the words create. This was not such a popular question and there was a marked lack of response to the power of the words. The Hopkins tended to be the more successful, though comments did not go much beyond the pointing out of alliteration.

SECTION C: PROSE

Wuthering Heights

Question 19

As ever with *Isabella* there is a mixture of possible responses. Pity might be invoked by her appearance, and by her self-evident desperation which has led her to drastic action. However, the reader may well also see evidence of the old *Isabella* in her self-centredness, and her assumption of her being a lady and therefore to be cosseted. There were some good answers on this question, all of which responded productively to *Isabella* as a character and picked out relevant details from the narrative. It was rare, however, to see any consideration of the effect of Nelly as narrator.

Question 20

Brontë makes Catherine Earnshaw into a character who is fated to live constantly on the edge. On a mundane level she can appear shockingly wilful and capricious, yet she is deeply passionate; grey is not a colour she would recognise. She with Heathcliff is a personification of elemental forces which are beyond rational explanation, and that is so even after her death. Good answers were characterised by a strong personal response and by reference to appropriate moments in the novel.

Question 21

Heathcliff is in despair and no longer interested in living. His thoughts are likely to be centred on the dead Catherine and how he desperately hopes to join her in some other world. Also he might be looking back on his life, perhaps realising that the success of his revenge has actually brought him no satisfaction. He might also recognise the irony of his actions having brought the younger Catherine and Hareton together, and perhaps see in their love the ultimate riposte to his harsh philosophy. This was the most popular of the three questions on this text. The weakest answers simply lifted dialogue *verbatim* from Heathcliff's last speech to Nelly. Others summarised Heathcliff's life and ascribed most improbable reactions to him (such as remorse, or delight in the romance between Catherine and Hareton), but there were some strong and distinctive voices in the best answers.

Nervous Conditions

This was not a popular text on this component and so it is difficult to make comments about candidates' performance.

Question 22

Candidates might have responded to Lucia's pragmatic realism - she despises Takesure but accepts that he can satisfy some of her needs. The narrator's attempts to influence Lucia's behaviour show her concern and her sense of morality. Takesure's singed hair helps to make this an amusing spectacle. The way in which Jeremiah and Takesure accept the credit for the women's repairs to the roof could be seen as both comic and revelatory about both individual characters, and the relative status of men and women in this culture. The need to repair the roof reveals the backbreaking and seemingly unending toil which constitutes life at the homestead.

Question 23

Babamukuru is the family benefactor, the bright boy made good through his own efforts and he is perceived as such by the family, and revered on his return to the homestead. He is, even at this stage, a little self-important and proud of his own achievements. There is much to admire in his generous treatment of his extended family - the provision of food and much else - and he assumes a patriarchal role in, for example, the *dare* concerning Takesure and Lucia. His word is law and he continues to be a figure of authority. However, he is rigid. Some candidates expressed outrage at his treatment of Nyasha, or his beating of Tambudzai after she refuses to attend her parents' wedding - and of his treatment of Maiguru.

Question 24

Maiguru has reached breaking point. Affairs are brought to a head by Babmukuru's punishment of Tambu for refusing to attend her parents' wedding, but this has unleashed a range of other feelings. She may well be feeling a sense that she has wasted her own potential by submitting to the traditional role of wife and mother. She may be feeling unreasonable guilt about the death of Nhamo while he was in her care (she refers to this in the argument with her husband). She is tired of the excessive and thankless workload she has to endure for the sake of her husband's family. She may well be considering her options for the future without having fully accepted her limited room for manoeuvre, but she will not be as fanciful as her daughter and niece.

Fasting, Feasting

Question 25

Mrs Patton's mood is almost manic ('wild' eyes). Melanie is stuffing mouthfuls of peanuts and tearful. Mr Patton is disappointed, angry at the absence of the family, and attempting joviality. Mrs Patton attempts to placate him. Key to the question is Arun's viewpoint and his impressions of the situation. The details of the writing are important e.g. the way in which Mr Patton is described like a baby 'his lower lip is moist' etc., the religious imagery, the ceremony of the barbeque. A recognition of the irony in the writing characterised the best answers.

Question 26

Candidates might have considered whether the power of the family is more obvious in India and the rules clearer. Male dominance in India appears to lead to extremes like Uma's treatment by Harish, and Anamika's tragic life. There seem to be more career opportunities in the USA but they are not always exploited. There is more expectation of domesticity in India. Candidates might well have reached the conclusion that women are oppressed to some extent in both societies but in different ways. There were a lot of one-solution responses. Usually the solution ran along the lines that women in India are cast into a subservient position, where they must obey and indulge their men-folk. They have no freedom; their education is limited, and they must marry into a family chosen by their parents. In America, on the other hand, things, though not perfect, are a lot better. But the problem is more complex. Desai sets most of the novel in India, so it is Indian women we meet, most often, and most intimately. Uma perhaps fits the stereotypes (though she has her moments of defiance), but Mama and Aruna, very much mother and daughter, seem to have engineered the running of their houses to their own advantage. When they want something, they get it. And Harish's ghastly mother certainly does not fit the stereotype. In America there are fewer women with whom to make a contrast, but Mrs Patton, despite her skimpy sunbathing, is not as free as some candidates would believe, and Melanie is just, well, very sad. In their assumption of conventional wisdom, that America is advanced and India backward, candidates missed the main difference, obvious from a little reflection on the novel. It is that in India the women are cared for. Uma is confined, fettered, but Mamapapa do not neglect her. Though misguided, they do in a strange way concern themselves for her welfare. In America, by contrast, the children forage for themselves in the refrigerator, and nobody even realises that Melanie is ill.

Question 27

Uma is on the train. She has had a terrible experience with her ghastly mother-in-law; but now again, in the relief of being rescued, Papa is humiliating her further by regaling all the passengers with what happened, and boasting about his successful intervention thanks to his legal training. And what about when they get home? It will be far worse than being brought back from School by Sister Theresa. Uma has a great deal on her mind. As she hides her face in her sari her thoughts will likely be crowded, confused. Good answers picked all this up. She will be thinking about her reflections on her marriage and the process leading to it, Harish, his family and their treatment of her, MamaPapa and particularly Papa, and the future. Her feelings on returning home may be relief only, or perhaps a sense of failure.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

This was not a popular text on this component and so it is difficult to make comments about candidates' performance.

Question 28

There are a number of reasons which make this such an amusing moment: the would be bride is delivered like a dusty parcel, for Sampath the difference between the fantasy bride and the reality makes him sick and he refuses to come down from the tree, then the would be bride is lifted into the tree only to fall ignominiously to ground after making the slightest of physical contacts with a horrified Sampath.

Question 29

How the character and his features are thought to be *particularly* entertaining was the focus of the task, and engagement with the ways in which Desai's writing makes the character so amusing.

Question 30

Sampath has had his epiphany with the guava. He is likely to be thinking that at that moment he saw the possible wonders of the natural world around him, that what is judged important in the everyday world is pointless, that he could not endure any longer the constrictions of life in Shahkot, and that he could escape all this by simply leaving home.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

Striking features of the extract are the hard drinking and smoking, the overt adultery going on between Tom and Myrtle, the artificiality of Catherine and the McKees, and the complete triviality of the conversation. The characters are representative of a particularly unattractive echelon of society; they try to be on a level with Tom but succeed only in appearing rather unpleasant and pathetic. Key to a good answer was the recognition that the impressions of them are all filtered through Nick's viewpoint. The very strong answers were terrifically attentive both to the nuances of Nick's descriptions and the (literal and metaphorical) angle from which he observes the companions. Many candidates did see something of the big picture; the tawdriness, the affected behaviour, the pretensions. 'Tacky' was a word frequently used. Better answers started here, mentioned the over-furnished room and the trophy dog, and then fitted the various characters appropriately into the picture. Catherine's artificiality was noticed and shrewdly analysed by almost everyone. Weaker answers failed to realise or know that Tom's companions were wannabes rather than rich people, and some seemed to have only a hazy idea of what was actually happening in the scene or were primarily focused on being censorious about the drinking, smoking and adultery. The weakest answers offered discourses on the American dream, how it was the dream of everyone, and that here everyone was shown to be reaching for their slice.

Question 32

Candidates might have considered the early days of the relationship, Gatsby's departure for the army, and Daisy's somewhat precipitate marriage to Tom. They might then have considered Gatsby's obsession with her, her reactions on his return, and finally her response to the accusations that he is a bootlegger. Some candidates wrote about whether Daisy had ever really loved Gatsby or was just pretending so that she could get his money. Some also considered whether she was just in love with her own wonderful self. The few

who did consider whether Daisy had ever in fact also loved Tom (the crucial implication of which is that she did not). Some candidates wrote very detailed and thoughtful accounts of how this question is crucial to the plot and an understanding of the novel. It was easier to make the case against, but some candidates argued for, and with some evidence they could gain a reasonable mark. Predictably, a nuanced view was likely to score highly. A surprisingly large number of candidates made no mention of Daisy letting Gatsby take the blame for the death of Myrtle (often described as 'murder'), or the Buchanan's precipitate flight immediately after Gatsby's murder and before the funeral.

Question 33

Mr Gatz will be thinking about how he heard of the death, his journey to the house, and his feelings on seeing it. He will also be thinking about his relationship with his son and the funeral. Though Mr Gatz only appears briefly, he has an idiosyncratic way of speaking and his pride in his son is very evident. He appears to bear no malice for being neglected and is completely in sympathy with Gatsby's ambitions. This was attempted by quite a few candidates, some of whom went astray asserting that Mr Gatz knew all about Daisy (extremely unlikely). Safer answers steered a more cautious course of asserting grief and confusion, although some of these also seemed convinced that Gatsby had not seen his father since he left home (explicitly contradicted by the text). Better answers showed his sympathy with Gatsby's desire for greatness and confusion about his death, and one particularly good one captured his voice very well indeed. This should not have been a difficult question, as the novel gives several promising leads, with Mr Gatz drawn quite clearly. He also possesses a distinctive voice: he is a solemn old man, helpless and dismayed; his grief is mixed with awed pride; he looks in vain for the crowds of mourners; he trembles; he always addresses Nick as Mr Carraway; and of his son he says 'Jimmy' and 'my boy'.

from *Stories Of Ourselves*

Question 34

The context was not strictly required but helpful, in that it describes the 'unpleasantly strange impression that the horse had made on him' and the horrible weather conditions. What makes the moment so disturbing is the impressions of the horse – it seems sinister, almost supernatural and he asks himself if it is clairvoyant - the darkness and wetness of the day, and the general hostility of the environment and the man's fear. The weakest answers asserted that the man was mad and the horse imaginary, which left little to be analysed in the passage; better answers managed to respond to pathetic fallacy and the almost cinematic quality of the feeling of 'when and where will it strike'.

Question 35

Candidates might have explored the ambiguity of Harold's feelings about his father in *The Fly in the Ointment*, and the old man's disappointment in Harold. In *The Custody of the Pumpkin* the 'fluffiness' of Lord Emsworth and Freddie's attempts to outwit him are central. This was another popular question, and most of the candidates who answered it chose the Pritchett. The weaker answers were predictably narrative, but there were many better and some good answers, which considered the symbolism of the fly, the abrupt changes in the old man's demeanour, and sometimes even the subtleties of the narrative voice. Most candidates had a basic understanding of the two characters, and could appreciate something of the dynamics between them. Weaker candidates saw a cold, hard, calculating father, and a more reasonable son who was in danger of become putty in his father's hands. Like Willy Loman the father was 'obsessed by money', and after that there was not much to say. Better candidates took a more nuanced view, seeing the father's criticisms as much defence as attack. Surprisingly few mentioned the incident of father climbing onto the table and then needing help to get down. (*Lean on me*). Some felt they ought to bring in the fly, but could not quite see its significance. The answers on Wodehouse were not as accomplished, some of them seeming not to know the story very well at all, and the better ones not getting much beyond narrative summary with a little understanding of how this might be either comic or satirical. Most candidates handled Lord Emsworth's feelings for his son with some competence, but then they assumed they had finished, and said nothing at all about the Hon Freddie's view of his father. The letter, surely so illustrative, was thus not mentioned at all.

Question 36

Mike will be thinking about T and his plan for Old Misery's house, escaping parental control, the destruction, especially the bits that he has been responsible for - and Mr Thomas and the role of look-out. This question was often done poorly for the reason that Mike was confused with another character (usually Blackie). Other answers correctly identified Mike but were confused about his attitude to the destruction, assuming that his age meant that he would be less committed and / or more understanding about the significance of the destruction. There were some reasonable answers drawing on his desire to fit in, and a plausible childish glee at how famous and successful his gang would be when everyone else heard about what they had done.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42
Set Texts: Closed Books-A

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- Showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text.
- Ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question.
- Maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract.
- Using a well-structured and developed argument.
- Supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared for the examination; knowledge of the texts was generally good, and most knew how to structure their answers and showed evidence of planning. Most candidates made appropriate question choices, though weaker candidates sometimes chose empathic questions that enabled them to show some knowledge and understanding, but not in a reasonably appropriate voice. When such candidates attempted a passage-based or essay question, they often fared better than in the empathic questions.

There were relatively few examples of rubric infringements and of the 'final answer syndrome', where it is obvious that time has run out and the final answer is much briefer and sketchier than the previous ones. In a few cases, candidates had written very lengthy plans, crossed them out and written almost identical final drafts. This is a waste of time in examination conditions and should be discouraged.

Overall there seemed to be a general understanding of meaning / ideas in the texts and a largely conscientious response to questions (even those responding in simple narrative); but only the most successful answers engaged with the language on a deeper level.

In general candidates used their knowledge of the texts judiciously, constructed convincing arguments, and illustrated them with apt quotations. The most successful went on to explore in detail the effects of language and imagery, and showed awareness of the authors' intentions. The best answers showed a close engagement with the texts and a real enjoyment of the books studied.

The point must be made that the words 'How' and 'In what ways' and 'explore' are specific indicators to candidates that more than narrative is required; that the main consideration is writer's method, and that the reinforcing words like 'memorably', 'vividly', 'strikingly' are also directed to consideration of the use of language. It is strongly recommended that teachers should make learners aware of the importance of these terms, and of the necessity to use them as the focus of their responses. Similarly the word 'significant' is one that candidates need to be familiar with, since it directs them to consideration of the function of a particular aspect of the text.

Lack of consideration of these words was particularly evident in some of the poetry answers. Whereas some candidates responded with enthusiasm and critical awareness to the poems selected, others seemed somewhat at sea and had difficulty in articulating anything beyond rough 'translations' or paraphrases of the poems. Sometimes they showed an awareness that they needed to explore the effect of language, but they did this by means of general personal responses such as describing how watching a sunrise in the early

morning made them feel, rather than by examining the way in which Wordsworth conveys this through words and imagery in *on Westminster Bridge*. It was good to see that there was less 'spotting' and no particularly 'fashionable' critical term this session, but there was a continuing tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be used instead of words which identify effects precisely.

Similarly there was a lack of really close reading of the extracts in some weaker answers to the * questions. Every session the Principal Examiner's Report comments on the necessity for candidates to give more than narrative run-throughs and to look analytically at the language used. Furthermore, the whole of the extract is important; it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for the discussion. Though there is not usually a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it, and it is easy to detect a lack of knowledge of the whole text.

Empathic questions generated some of the higher-scoring responses, with several assuming a credible voice; that said, some responses in this category produced narrowly focused answers, often ignoring broader aspects of the character or their significance in the play / novel. Most candidates knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question.

In the past, it has been commented that the sense of drama is underdeveloped in responses to the plays on the papers and this continues to be a concern. For example, the best answers to questions on *Julius Caesar* showed an understanding of the visual qualities of the scene, and of the dynamics between the characters, as well as responding to changes in tone and mood. Weaker answers merely gave run-throughs of the passages.

Though it is appreciated that not all candidates will be able to see plays in production, the acting of scenes in class is an important tool in developing this sense. Too often candidates refer to plays as 'books', revealing that they see them only as words on a page.

There was some poorly presented work this session, thankfully a minority, with handwriting that was very difficult to decipher. Candidates do themselves a disservice if they do not take pride in their work, and chaotic presentation often reflects a lack of coherence in the answer.

There follow notes on all the texts indicating some of the ideas that candidates might have used in their answers. They are not intended to be seen as templates for perfect answers; any relevant ideas that were supported from the text were credited. There are also indications of what candidates did particularly well and areas in which they were not quite so successful.

SECTION A: DRAMA

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

This was a very popular text and question. In the passage Happy is clearly at his most unpleasant. He is a blatant liar in everything he says, relishes his capacity to make people believe his lies, sees women as pitiable objects to be seduced and then argues that that is the reason why he has never married, without thinking that there is a possibility that some women understand him all too well. The question invited a strong personal response and many candidates offered very critical opinions, particularly about his treatment of Miss Forsythe as a 'piece of meat' whom he is quite ready to pass over to his brother. Some were able to find it in their hearts to sympathise with him, seeing his behaviour as another form of attention-seeking because he has always been made to feel inferior to his brother. The most able candidates linked Happy's behaviour back to Willy's own values, his unfaithfulness, and his shallow appreciation of the world. Weaker answers tended to see only the surface meaning of the passage and thought he was quite charming in his flirtatiousness. Knowledge of context was clearly an advantage.

Question 2

There was a wide range of choice for this question but the key point was the dramatic effect of the time shifts and, though most candidates were able to identify apt instances, they often merely narrated them rather than focusing on the way in which the past illuminates the present. The most able showed that they understood the significance of these moments to explore Willy's past, to raise tension, to provoke pathos for Willy, and to show the extent of his mental disintegration

Question 3

Biff is likely to be thinking about his present unsatisfactory life, and his lack of vision for the future. His confidence about the interview with Bill Oliver will be offset by his uncertainty as to whether he really was the life of a businessman. Willy's expectations of him may provoke feelings of disgust. Most candidates knew the context and understood Biff's feelings very well. There were some very competent assumptions of his voice.

Julius Caesar

Question 4

The key words in the question were 'a dramatic and significant moment in the play', so more than a mere run-through of the extract was required. Good answers commented on the fickleness and potential violence of the plebeians, who are easily won over by Brutus, on Brutus's self-justification and the manner of it, and on the entry of Antony and the implications of leaving Antony alone with the plebeians. The best answers explored Brutus's oratory in detail, showing what it reveals of his character. Candidates often gave a narrative response, with considerable re-telling of events and explaining of meaning, and little awareness of context. Many candidates understood the skills of Brutus as an orator and explored his language with confidence. They also understood the political sensitivity of the situation and the fickleness of the crowd. Many also made the point that allowing Mark Anthony to speak was a mistake, and that that this made the extract even more significant since it was the beginning of Brutus's downfall. There was some confusion about whether or not Brutus had deliberately killed Caesar for his own ends or whether he had been tricked. Some candidates suggested that Brutus was deliberately lying to the crowd as he had killed Caesar in order to gain the crown himself.

Question 5

'To what extent' was a key consideration in examining sympathy for Cassius, and candidates tended to begin by feeling contempt for him but came to feel more sympathy as the play progresses. Their perceptions of his character covered his jealousy of Caesar, his flattery of Brutus, without whom he is unable to raise support, and on the other hand his success as a soldier, generally respected except by Caesar and Antony. Issues under consideration were his part in the conspiracy, his treatment by Brutus before Philippi, and the manner of his death. Some candidates did not engage with Cassius on a human level and merely saw him as a pantomime villain. Many acknowledged that his character had changed and that there was more sympathy with him towards the end of the play, but they were unable to truly communicate how and why.

Question 6

There were some very competent assumptions of the character of Brutus, showing his appreciation of the nobility and courage of his wife, and of the strength of their bond. They tended to focus on his sense of honour and his fear of the outcome of the conspiracy. Many smoothly integrated echoes of the text into their answers. Weaker answers tended to pour out plenty of emotion but did not refer in detail to what has happened in the meeting with the conspirators.

The Tempest

Question 7

The extract (Act III Scene ii) develops the blossoming attempt by Caliban to persuade his fellow-drinkers to plot against and overthrow Prospero, and is comic in the way in which the drunken Stephano and Trinculo attempt to be effective. Caliban's descriptions of Prospero and Miranda are compelling; he obviously has some understanding of the sources of Prospero's power. The 'isle is full of noises' speech reveals his character as more complex than it might have at first appeared. The way that the conspirators are led on by Ariel's music contributes to the dramatic power of the scene, as Ariel is going to tell Prospero of their plans. The key words were 'dramatic' and 'amusing', and successful answers focused sharply on them and developed arguments. Many candidates understood the humour in it; that there was comic relief after a previously tense scene, and that Caliban was comic and foolish. Unfortunately they did not engage with the language to any great extent, and there was little reference to the brutality of Caliban's threats.

Question 8

Central points were Caliban's truculent and resentful reaction to Prospero's physical punishments, the fact that he regards himself as having been robbed of his birthright by Prospero. Candidates might also have referred to his attempts to involve others in his plots against Prospero's power. In fact there were some excellent answers which confidently debated the previously kind treatment of Prospero and his cruel treatment of Caliban. Many saw the injustice of what had happened and discussed how Shakespeare created this sense of injustice. Those who referred closely and in detail to Caliban's language achieved high marks, though some weaker candidate referred only to the extract for **Question 7** and thus limited their achievement significantly. A number of candidates wrote about *their feelings about Caliban*, rather than Caliban's feelings. Many simply described Caliban's feelings or responded to the character in a very basic way.

Question 9

Miranda has come a long way emotionally in a very short time. She has met and fallen in love with the third man she has ever seen. She has learned a great deal about her background and early history in her conversation with her father. Her love for Ferdinand seems all consuming as she declares she would also happily be his servant. She is likely to be glad and relieved that her prospective father-in-law is as happy to bless the union as her own father, and she is likely to show some bewilderment at the pace of events. Many candidates embarked on this task enthusiastically but success was dependent on achieving the compassionate serenity of her voice, often through the integration of some of her actual words.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

This text was not widely studied, but those who offered it responded very enthusiastically to it and there were some very good answers. The opening of the play immediately introduces the audience to the witty banter which is common to most of the play's characters - characters who set about turning the accepted norms upside down - and the most successful answers explored this idea of reversal and inversion with gusto. They also commented on the conflict between the characters and the plot development which is being set up. There were several candidates who thought Lane was a woman. A number of broadly narrative responses went a good way beyond the given extract in discussing the opening of the play.

Question 11

Cecily is a lively girl, who has been isolated in the country from the much more exciting world of London. Miss Prism is a stern, earnest and humourless spinster with no contact to a girl's world and aspirations. She behaves rather like a gaoler and so at the first opportunity Cecily rebels. The question is why this is so funny, and unless answers were able to discuss the dialogue in some detail and to move beyond narrative they were unlikely to be successful. Several responses focused principally or even exclusively on Miss Prism's relationship with Dr Chasuble, ignoring Cecily almost totally.

Question 12

Algernon 'loves scrapes'. He is likely to be thinking that here is the ideal opportunity for a scrape. He has been intrigued for a long time by the mysteries surrounding his friend's life, and now is the opportunity to solve the mystery and to have some fun at Jack's expense. There were some extremely convincing and lively assumptions of the character of Algernon; many candidates appeared to find it easy to get into his voice. Most managed to say something that showed some level of understanding / knowledge of Algernon's character. The best captured his mischievous scheming, whilst the weaker ones were overly plot-based.

SECTION B: POETRY

There are many ways of interpreting a poem, and any ideas that could be supported were credited. Answers which explored the imagery and show sensitivity to the music of the poetry were very successful, but those that merely explained or narrated the content of the poem rarely achieved a mark higher than Band 5.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

This text was only offered by a few Centres, but candidates seemed to enjoy the poems, probably because of their strong narrative elements and their musical quality.

Question 13

The key word in the questions was 'admire', and so straightforward character sketches did not attract high marks. Ulysses has prepared for the final journey; he has put his house in order with Telemachus and seems to be content to hand over the reins of power to his son. This may be seen as courageous and sensible or as defeatist. He is encouraging his old friends and compatriots to make the most of their last days with him, and is courageous in refusing to succumb to old age. He insists on pressing onwards into the unknown, though he accepts the inevitability of death. Good answers responded well to the tone of the poem and explored the imagery in some detail. Weaker answers did not seem to fully understand the character or Tennyson's purpose.

Question 14

Elements for consideration were the curse, the entrapment and loneliness of the Lady, her willingness to sacrifice herself for love, Sir Lancelot, and the fantasy background (the mediaeval castle, knights in armour). Good answers went beyond narrative, and considered the way the language and imagery and the form of the poem all contribute to the effect. Weak answers merely told the story.

Question 15

This is the final section of the poem and has a sense of completion about it. The mood has changed from grief and despair to one of hope and optimism, though there are still tinges of sadness. The imagery is full of light and colour, and there is a sense of new life in nature which is reflected in the poet ('in my breast Spring wakens too'). The strong rhymes give a sense of uplift. The discriminator was the strength of response to 'moving', and the details in which the language was explored, not merely explained.

Songs Of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

This question was perhaps the most popular on the whole paper. Answers ranged across all levels, but almost all understood the poem and the poet's feelings about what bliss it was to be alive, and attempted to communicate this very positively. It was, however, an easy poem to 'parrot', and many answers were deceptive, in that they seemed good but actually consisted only of choosing a great many lines and paraphrasing what they said. There were innumerable blue skies and gentle clouds. 'Calm' and 'wonder' appeared over-frequently, without a clear understanding of *how* they had been created. Answers therefore tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. Candidates might have commented on the lack of activity in the poem and identified specific features of the diction of the poem which support this, e.g. 'silent', 'smokeless', 'calm', 'still'. They might have commented on the use of repetition, e.g. of 'Never', on the contrast between human inactivity and the ongoing processes of nature, and on the rhythm and form of the sonnet, and how it contributes to the creation of this sense of calm and wonder. However not many answers showed a secure understanding of what a sonnet is. There was a good deal of misreading of the line referring to 'valley, rock, or hill', which many seemed to think meant that these natural features existed in the middle of London. The main problem was a lack of analysis of the words. Many candidates took a line by line approach, offering a sort of paraphrase or explanation and even sometimes inventing a scenario, for example, "Earth has not anything to show more fair" The world is full of beautiful gardens but Wordsworth does not find any of them as appealing as to his view which shows that he was in awe.' (sic.). There was, however, feature-spotting, e.g. 'there is personification', but without any development. There was some confusion about when the poem was written and suggestions that it was calm because there were no cars, and some candidates seemed not to realise that the poem is about London.

Question 17

Key words in this question were 'the power of nature'. In *Hunting Snake* candidates might have commented on the contrast between the language used to describe the humans out for a gentle walk and the more intense language to describe the appearance and activity of the snake, and on the effect of the snake on them. *Pike* apparently offered more explicit references to power because of the violence and malevolence of the creature, and it produced some extremely good answers. Candidates seemed to engage powerfully with the power of nature in the two animals, with strong descriptions of movement and, of course, grins and jaws. Answers were focused and used language creatively to communicate feelings, candidates often writing at length. Weaker answers showed a working knowledge of the chosen poem but they did not relate it to the 'power' of nature, instead discussing in general terms what it told them about nature.

Question 18

The sustained use of simile by Rossetti and the ways in which Hopkins uses compound words to create images of pined beauty were central here. It was a fairly open question, but answers required more than mere listing of appropriate words and images. Analysis was the key to success and focus on the effect created on tone and mood. A number of otherwise competent candidates provided unnecessary biographical details for both poets and, while picking up one or two marks for knowledge, lost focus on the poems and the marks they might have gained by exploring the language more closely.

SECTION C: PROSE

Wuthering Heights

This text was offered by only a few Centres, so comments are by necessity limited.

Question 19

A number of things might be thought to point to a changed relationship. Heathcliff and Cathy no longer seem to value and share the same things. Catherine wants civilised conversation which Heathcliff cannot provide. He is a farm labourer, she is a lady, and therefore much drawn to Edgar Linton's world as is made clear through the passage. Almost all candidates understood Heathcliff's feelings and the changes in Catherine, but there were many intrusive paragraphs about what happened elsewhere in the novel.

Question 20

The key word in this question is 'compelling'. Heathcliff is larger than life in everything. He is a man of huge energy, consuming passions, violent rages and the capacity for vengeance and at times titanic imagination. Although there were some valiant efforts to engage with 'compelling', engaging with two sides of Heathcliff's character, there were whole chunks of writing describing his childhood and early years.

Question 21

Edgar Linton is besotted, as Nelly Dean observes. He will be thinking about the vibrant personality of this young woman who lives with an intensity which he finds overwhelming, disconcerting, but utterly beguiling. He might also be thinking with self-satisfaction about how he can offer Catherine the life of a lady, and how he is just the man to 'civilise' further this still rather wild creature. Most candidates knew the context of the question, but quite a few did not understand Edgar's state of mind, not quite capturing his mixed feelings about what had happened. The best answers picked this up and explored it well.

Nervous Conditions

This was a very popular text and candidates had clearly derived a good deal of enjoyment from it.

Question 22

Lucia has just overheard herself accused of witchcraft by Takesure at the *dare*, and her impulsive and passionate personality mean that she cannot hold back from action. The monolith of male dominance is subverted by Lucia's directness. The men are having to take notice of her. She offers a role model to Tambu and the other women. Good answers commented on the slapstick elements of her assault, and explored the manner in which her treatment of Takesure and his helpless submission to her physical force are described. Some noticed that even the patriarchy smiles at these events. Candidates understood the politics of gender equality and used the term patriarch / patriarchal confidently. The more able were also capable of seeing that Lucia's behaviour was the beginning of emancipation for some of the other female characters. However, there was little engagement with the language or understanding of the humour in the passage. Candidates struggled to show how Babamukuru's power was thwarted and to comment on his reaction. Candidates did not address the strength of personality that Lucia would have to exhibit in order to break into this patriarchal conference. Nor did they comment on her adopting masculine attitudes and resorting to violence.

Question 23

The relationship between Babamukuru and his wife is quite complex. Both have experience of different cultures, and Maiguru on her return from England seems to have made a conscious decision to subordinate Babamukuru's patriarchal status. For much of the novel, she only infrequently attempts to make him change his mind and uses a good deal of baby talk in trying to keep him sweet. He clearly requires her to have the last word, and seems unwilling or unable to change. Maiguru is clearly frustrated that her educational qualifications count for nothing beside his, and that he takes all her salary. Maiguru's five day visit to her brother seems to mark a change in the balance of power. The relationship is presented through the narrator's description of it, together with their daughter Nyasha's comments. Some candidates misunderstood the relationship between Maiguru and Babamukuru and suggested that it was one of love, and that Maiguru was happy to look after Babamukuru and content not to work.

Question 24

Mr Matimba appears to have recognised some potential in Tambu and has given her a chance to realise it by the attempt to sell mealies. He receives ten pounds from Doris, having had to convince her that he was not exploiting Tambu as child labour. In order to do this, he has had to play a role as a subservient and ingratiating black man to this old white woman, which, given his behaviour elsewhere, is unlikely to have been a pleasure for him. He may well be thinking now that this trip was worthwhile. He has clearly given thought to how to dispose of the money. He may well be anticipating some resistance to his plans from Tambu's parents, but will be determined that the money made will be put to good use towards Tambu's education. This was well answered on the whole, with good understanding and good knowledge of the text, including suitable condemnation of Tambu's parents and brother. It was interesting that little was made of the encounter with Doris. Tambu's ambitions and calibre were given due attention.

Fasting, Feasting

Question 25

Arun is suffering physical discomfort and has almost had an accident. He is also suffering mental discomfort, as he does not understand the family dynamics. 'Arun knows when to leave a family scene'. He does not fit in with the American way of life, he is revolted by the meat-eating, and he is bemused by Melanie and Rod. Good answers commented on the violence of 'the seeping blood of whatever carcass Mr Patton has chosen...', and the irony of 'one can not tell what is more dangerous in this country, the pursuit of health or of sickness'. There was clearly a sense of engagement with Arun and his feelings of isolation. Candidates explored both his physical and his emotional discomfort, and commented closely on how Desai had crafted this.

Question 26

Melanie is truculent, bad mannered, and uncommunicative. She lacks a meaningful relationship with her parents and they are apparently unconcerned - particularly her father. She is bulimic. This question was answered less well than the others on this text. Little sympathy or understanding was felt for Melanie; most candidates considered her to be rude and aggressive, but had little understanding of bulimia or Desai's critique of some American values.

Question 27

Dr Dutt would be reviewing the visit and its purpose and thinking about Uma and her potential, her impressions of MamaPapa, and her thoughts about the position of women in this society. The voice would be educated and westernised. Not many examples were seen of responses to this question and few displayed a secure grasp of the moment specified.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 28

The morning activities might be thought to show Mr. Chawla as a ridiculous man of great self-importance and self-satisfaction, of busy, busy energy, who expects to be waited on hand and foot by the women of the family and to be listened to whenever he opens his mouth to spout an opinion. Many candidates wrote on the extract but struggled to understand how personality was revealed. There was quite a narrative approach by some of the candidates, and many seemed not to be able to view Mr Chawla's early morning routine as a

facet of his organised and rather rigid personality. Few candidates were sensitive to any of the details of the passage.

Question 29

Two approaches might be adopted. Sampath clearly likes a life of leisure. His ideal is to be waited upon, and he relishes being the centre of interest on his own terms. He is also capable of radiating apparent wisdom. Alternatively it might be argued that he is a genuine dreamer, and does have some natural and rather mysterious affinity with the natural world. Candidates tended to answer this question well. Many were able to link the events before Sampath's birth with his personality as he grew up, and his behaviour in the guava orchard.

Question 30

Sweet Miss Jyotsna who worships Sampath is likely to be thinking that this is the most dreadful moment of her life. She will have no idea what has happened or where he has gone, just that what has become her mission to support him has suddenly evaporated. Now there just remains her boring life at the post office. Voices for Miss Jyotsna ranged from grief to pleasure to anger to heartbreak. Some candidates were uncertain about what her voice should be. A few more successful candidates wrote knowledgeably about life in the Post Office, the flirting, and Sampath's knowledge of secrets.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

The arid and unpleasant quality of the landscape, Wilson's run-down premises, and the general air of poverty provide a suitably unpleasant – and symbolic – backdrop. Both George and Myrtle are described in unattractive terms; George is weak and colourless, Myrtle overweight and overdone and contemptuous of George. Tom is able to control both of them. This was a very popular question that produced a range of responses. The best covered both parts of the question and focused on 'unpleasant', whereas some only looked at one aspect of the task. Most were able to comment on Wilson (with some condemning him because he looked 'anaemic') and most picked up on Myrtle's attitude towards her husband, especially her 'walking through her husband as if he were a ghost'. The best answers made critical comment on the effect of the language used by Fitzgerald and the impact of the adjectives.

Question 32

Candidates might well have commented on the parties and those who attend them, the conspicuous consumption and greed, the class consciousness (new and old money), and the lack of depth in the relationships. Gatsby himself thinks that money is the answer to everything. Though candidates had clearly been taught about 'the Jazz Age', some had difficulty in producing cohesive arguments here and limited themselves to Daisy's reaction to Gatsby's shirts, and to Tom's philandering. The best answers were very condemnatory of the way in which Gatsby is sued by the party-goers, and that none turn up at his funeral.

Question 33

Gatsby will be thinking about Tom's reaction when he was told that Daisy did not love him, Daisy's behaviour, and the effect on her of the accusation of bootlegging. He will also be thinking about the journey home. Responses showed an accurate knowledge of textual detail; many failed to capture Gatsby's 'shock' and 'despair', a few completely misunderstood his reaction (e.g. optimistic about future). Some foretold the fact Daisy was in a state and that if she drove she might kill someone. The best answers had the right mix of Gatsby's turmoil, mulling over what had happened; especially what Daisy had said and why.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 34

It would be virtually impossible to write about the ending without making reference to earlier parts of the story, and to Leila's excitement and enjoyment of the dancing, which are deflated by the fat man's cynicism. The effect of his words and her recovery are conveyed very strikingly in the extract, and the discriminator was the extent to which answers went beyond narrative / description and focused on 'memorable', seeing the implications of the fat man's words and Mansfield's intentions. This was a fairly popular text and question, with lots of reference to detail overall in responses. There was, however, a popular misconception that the question was what made the ball memorable for Leila, rather than what made the writing memorable for the reader.

Question 35

In both cases the humour is what makes the story entertaining – in the Wodehouse it comes from the strong authorial voice, in *My Greatest Ambition* from the self-deprecating first person narrative. Answers needed to focus on significant detail: in *the Custody of the Pumpkin* on the way they the characters – 'fluffy' Lord Emsworth, his idiot son, the dour McAllister and the millionaire Mr Donaldson - are described and the interactions between them; in *My Greatest Ambition* on the contrast between the expectations of the boy of 13 and the reflections upon them of his older self. Most candidates were able to describe some things that were entertaining about the stories named, and some addressed the ways in which the writer made them so. Wodehouse was better understood than Lurie, though there were good answers on both. The most successful candidates were the ones who had the best grasp of the background and social setting of the former.

Question 36

The American will be thinking about his impressions of India, in particular this remote part, the meeting with Muni, the negotiations for the horse, his wife's possible reactions and his intentions for the horse. The American makes great play of the fact that he is not rich. He has been completely baffled by most of the conversations with Muni, and there may well be a rather patronising tone to his observations. This was a popular question; content was reasonable and knowledge of detail sound. There were a few convincing Americans, but generally there was not a great deal of success in capturing the voice and the character was not clearly understood. Often responses could have done with including much more textual evidence.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43

Set Texts: Closed Books-A

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- Showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text.
- Ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question.
- Maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract.
- Using a well-structured and developed argument.
- Supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared for the examination; knowledge of the texts was generally good, and most knew how to structure their answers and showed evidence of planning. Most candidates made appropriate question choices, though weaker candidates sometimes chose empathic questions that enabled them to show some knowledge and understanding, but not in a reasonably appropriate voice. When such candidates attempted a passage-based or essay question, they often fared better than in the empathic questions.

There were relatively few examples of rubric infringements and of the 'final answer syndrome', where it is obvious that time has run out and the final answer is much briefer and sketchier than the previous ones. In a few cases, candidates had written very lengthy plans, crossed them out and written almost identical final drafts. This is a waste of time in examination conditions and should be discouraged.

Overall there seemed to be a general understanding of meaning / ideas in the texts and a largely conscientious response to questions (even those responding in simple narrative); but only the most successful answers engaged with the language on a deeper level.

In general candidates used their knowledge of the texts judiciously, constructed convincing arguments, and illustrated them with apt quotations. The most successful went on to explore in detail the effects of language and imagery, and showed awareness of the authors' intentions. The best answers showed a close engagement with the texts and a real enjoyment of the books studied. It was noticeable, however, that a number of candidates were using pre-prepared material that was only loosely connected to the questions. It was a particular issue in answers to questions 4 and 35. Many candidates had been taught, or had picked up from external sources, material on Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, which they wrote about with much enthusiasm. This meant that there were a significant number of almost identical answers to Question 4 which began by referring to 'ethos' 'pathos' and 'logos', going on to identify these elements in the passage, but only tangentially touching on the terms of the question: 'How does Shakespeare make Antony such a persuasive and impressive figure at this moment in the play?' There was usually a little relevance to what makes him persuasive, but 'impressive' was often ignored, and there was little sense of context. Candidates at this level do not need to employ these technical terms. The main focus of the questions is always on their personal response and on their knowledge of the text. Similarly, a lot of rote material appeared in relation to *The Destructors* (Question 35), where candidates gave very general answers relying on assertions about how the war had damaged the children and perverted their moral sense, but not actually examining the details of the story or conveying what they personally found disturbing.

The point must be made that the words 'How' and 'In what ways' and 'explore' are specific directions to candidates that more than narrative is required; that the main consideration is writer's method, and reinforcing words like 'memorably', 'vividly', 'strikingly' are also directed to consideration of the language. It is strongly recommended that teachers should make learners aware of the importance of these terms and of the necessity to use them as the focus of their responses. Similarly the word 'significant' is one that candidates need to be familiar with, since it directs them to consideration of the function of a particular aspect of the text.

Lack of consideration of these words was particularly evident in some of the poetry answers. Whereas some candidates responded with enthusiasm and critical awareness to the poems selected, others seemed somewhat at sea and had difficulty in articulating anything beyond rough 'translations' or paraphrases of the poems. Sometimes they showed an awareness that they needed to explore the effect of language but they did this by means of general personal responses, describing how something made them feel rather than by examining the way in which the poet creates an effect. It was good to see that there was less 'feature spotting' and no particularly 'fashionable' critical term this session, but there was a continuing tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be used instead of words which identify effects precisely.

Similarly there was a lack of really close reading of the extracts in some weaker answers to the * questions. Every session the Principal Examiner's Report comments on the necessity for candidates to give more than narrative run-throughs and to look analytically at the language used. Furthermore, the whole of the extract is important; it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for the discussion. Though there is not usually a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it and it is easy to detect a lack of knowledge of the whole text.

Empathic questions generated some of the higher-scoring responses, with several assuming a credible voice; that said, some responses in this category produced narrowly focused answers, often ignoring broader aspects of the character or their significance in the play / novel. Most candidates knew the importance of writing 'in character', and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question.

In the past, it has been commented that the sense of drama is underdeveloped in responses to the plays on the papers and this continues to be a concern. For example, the best answers to questions on *Julius Caesar* showed an understanding of the visual qualities of the scene, and of the dynamics between the characters, as well as responding to changes in tone and mood. Weaker answers merely gave run-throughs of the passages. Though it is appreciated that not all candidates will be able to see plays in production, the acting of scenes in class is an important tool in developing this sense. Too often candidates refer to plays as 'books', revealing that they see them only as words on a page.

It may seem a trivial issue, but there was some poorly presented work, thankfully a minority, with handwriting that was very difficult to decipher. Candidates do themselves a disservice if they do not take pride in their work, and chaotic presentation often reflects a lack of coherence in the answer.

There follow notes on all the texts indicating some of the ideas that candidates might have used in their answers. They are not intended to be seen as templates for perfect answers; any relevant ideas that were supported from the text were credited. There are also indications of what candidates did particularly well, and areas in which they were not quite so successful.

SECTION A: DRAMA

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

Charley comes across in this extract as someone who genuinely cares for Willy's welfare. He senses that Willy is very unsettled and seeks to quieten things down with a game of cards, and by attempting to put things in perspective. He recognises that Willy is commercially a failure yet out of kindness offers him a job. He maintains his good humour despite Willy several times insulting him. This question was a popular choice. Most candidates were able to find relevant points about Charley's 'goodness'. In some cases, candidates wrote more about Willy than Charley, and responses lacked focus. Some responses were very literal and failed to see below the surface meaning. Detailed understanding of deceptively simple language and the way it can be interpreted in this particular context was the factor that discriminated between different

candidates' responses. Less accomplished answers gave a 'running commentary' of the rather than analysing what was going on 'between the lines'.

Question 2

Candidates might have expressed sympathy for Biff and Happy in the light of the way they have been brought up, the spurious set of values and assumptions given them by Willy, their resultant failure in the real world, and Biff's final facing up to the truth. They may also have found them unsympathetic characters who are full of bombast, macho in their attitudes, and in the case of Happy whining in failure. Again, most candidates were able to find at least some valid points to write about. This question also seemed to generate engaged responses and identification with characters. The main weakness was not enough detailed support and points that were quite general. Overall, there was little evaluation. Most candidates only really discussed how one can sympathise with the two boys, rather than offering a balanced perspective. The best answers saw the significance of Willy's upbringing and how it created the path to adulthood for his two sons, but were able to cite some unforgivable behaviour as well. Some weaker candidates were completely confused about the time differences within the play, and some were under the impression that Happy knew about 'the woman' and Boston.

Question 3

Willy is in despair and may be thinking that his life is effectively over, and that he can no longer face the continuing and humiliating failure of all his dreams. Less despairingly he may also be thinking that now despite everything Biff does love him, and that his death with the insurance and the house paid for will help Biff at last to be the success he yearned for in a son. Those candidates who chose this question sometimes found it difficult to pitch – should it be delusional to the end, or a mixture of this and coming to terms with the reality of failure? Better answers integrated some excellent textual references and showed strong personal engagement with the text.

Julius Caesar

Question 4

(See general comments above). In answering this question the context is not directly required but helpful. Antony is successfully discrediting Brutus and the other conspirators by his emotional description of the actual killing, and his 'modesty'. The crowd are eating out of his hand. This question was by far the most popular choice. Generally candidates were well prepared and able to offer some valid points. Most were able to identify some of Anthony's persuasive features. Many candidates however did not go quite far enough in their analysis. They made an initial comment on an identified feature but could have drawn out more significance. Higher achieving candidates were able to explore the power and effectiveness of the writing, and conveyed a real sense of enjoyment. There were some impressive pieces of analysis, although more distinction between 'persuasive' and 'impressive' would have improved some answers. Many candidates offered valid but general points which were not supported well enough or rooted in the text. Similarly, some candidates fixated on explaining the Aristotelian techniques that are used in the speech to the extent that they never got around to discussing the language itself in any detail.

Question 5

Candidates needed to consider the different motives of the characters, Brutus's domination of them, and the lack of clear objectives following the death of Caesar. They needed also to look at Antony and Octavius and their alliance. The best answers were able to consider a range of evidence from throughout the play, rather than focus entirely on the relationship between Brutus and Cassius.

Question 6

Cassius will be feeling delight and satisfaction at the achievement and thinking about what has led up to this, his relationship with Brutus, and his vision for the future. There were relatively few attempts at this question, but the material was generally well known and most candidates created convincing voices for Cassius; the best seamlessly integrating quotations or echoes of the text.

The Tempest

Question 7

Some of the comic effect of this scene is visual, and stronger candidates were likely to show some awareness of this. Stephano's misapprehension concerning the hybrid beast is compounded by the fact that he has taken drink, and has given some to Caliban. Trinculo's emergence from Caliban's gabardine provides some comedy. Caliban's amazement at the appearance of the two drunkards swiftly turns to oaths of allegiance. Candidates might find the contrast between their concern about supplies of drink and Caliban's awed worship of them both amusing and moving, the poignancy enhanced by Trinculo's mockery. The more perceptive may have noted how Caliban's response to these two parallels Miranda's reaction to her 'brave new world'. This was a very popular choice and generally produced reasonable answers. Candidates seemed well prepared and had quite a lot of background knowledge. Generally, candidates were able to respond in varying degrees to 'amusing', and less so to 'moving'. Some candidates went off on a tangent about theories of colonisation and slavery. A noticeable feature of the best answers was that candidates were aware of the visual aspect of the scene, and made reference to the audience perspective.

Question 8

Much depended on the choice of scene. In some cases, music accompanies magic, so that it signals the beginning and end of a period when some of the characters are under the influence of the supernatural (e.g. the plot between Antonio and Sebastian). Ariel's songs lead Ferdinand to Miranda and Prospero, and so are instrumental in plot development. Some of the songs are more ribald and show the influence of strong drink. Candidates needed to remember to focus on dramatic impact in order to merit higher marks. This was not a popular choice, and it is therefore difficult to make comment about general performance.

Question 9

Prospero has engineered this encounter, so he will be pleased that his plans are working out. He may be reflecting on his hopes for the outcome of their meeting but he will, like any protective father, have some concerns for his daughter. He will be revising his assessment of the merits of her suitor, and may well be reflecting on the wider implications of his daughter's involvement with Ferdinand's family. There were some assured assumptions made about the character here. The material was generally well known, and most candidates were able to create a reasonably convincing voice.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

Wilde here is ridiculing the hardly credible revelations so common to Victorian melodrama. Jack, having discovered that Miss Prism is not his unmarried mother, discovers he is Algernon's long lost brother which makes him Lady Bracknell's nephew, which makes him eligible, just, to marry Gwendolen, provided that his name is Ernest, which fortunately it is. Many candidates tackled this question but relatively few managed to address it successfully. The farcical elements of the drama were generally missed at this point. Most candidates were able to refer back to earlier moments in the drama, and support their thinking with some textual reference to suggest straightforward changes in the behaviour and outlook of key players. However they tended to miss the comedy of the language; the sense of energy from younger members of the cast; how that energy might contrast with Lady Bracknell; and the speed with which all issues are resolved. All these features help create a sense of *hilarity*, a more intense quality than merely being funny.

Question 11

There is a wealth of material from which to choose. It could include such things as Wilde's ridicule of the arcane customs of this society as set out, for instance, by Lady Bracknell, its snobbery, its idleness and boredom, and its ineffectuality in controlling the desires of the young. He constantly undermines moral and social norms by turning them wittily on their heads. There was a tendency with some candidates attempting this question to provide broad assertions about aspects of Victorian life, rather than focus on those aspects of behaviour and values demonstrated within the drama.

Question 12

Proposing to Gwendolen is Jack's pre-occupation at this moment. Therefore he is likely to be hoping that his decision to call on Algernon will prove a way of meeting her, that he can separate her from her Mother's inevitable attendance, and that his proposal will be successful. There were only a few responses to this question so it is difficult to make any general judgements about performance.

SECTION B: POETRY

There are many ways of interpreting a poem; there follow ideas that the poems in question might suggest. Any ideas that could be supported were credited, and answers which explored the imagery and showed sensitivity to the music of the poetry gained high reward.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

This was a less popular text than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who had studied it showed a good deal of engagement with the poems, probably because of their narrative qualities and the musicality of the verse forms. Discrimination, as ever, came from the degree of detailed analysis of the language.

Question 13

The ending of the poem is so sad because of the setting – it is autumn and it is raining, and there is a sense of death about the environment. The Lady is in a trance-like state; she seems to be moving almost automatically, and her death is described as slow and cold. Also significant are Sir Lancelot's reaction and the reactions of the local people. The regular, even inexorable, rhythm contributes to the inevitability of the Lady's demise.

Question 14

Candidates needed to consider what is meant by 'disturbing' – is it the character's physical or mental state? They might have fixed on Mariana's isolation, neglect, betrayal by her lover and the way in which all this is reflected by the moated grange, or on the Speaker's turmoil in *Maud*. The death of his lover seems to have rendered him in a state of living death. They needed to look at the way in which the words and images, and the versification of the poems, reinforce these ideas.

Question 15

The change of mood from grief and despair to a more optimistic feeling looking forward to the New Year is very different from other sections of the poem. There has been a movement from introversion to more social and political concerns – there is a sense of the existence of the rest of the world. The four line verse form, and the repetition of 'Ring out', has an exhilarating effect and the language reflects the rejection of 'the false' and the positive values of 'sweeter manners' 'purer laws' etc.

Songs Of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

The horses are described with the hyperbolic terms: 'monsters', 'seraphim', 'gigantic', and the wider language of the poem is elemental: 'apocalyptic', 'ecstatic', 'rage invisible and blind'. Imagery is associated with heat and light, and with machinery and mechanical power. A key point is the child's viewpoint and the way in which this is conveyed through the vision of the horses. A large number of candidates responded to this question. Most candidates focused on the concept of 'power' in *Horses* really well, and were able to identify some of the features in the poem with varying degrees of ability, and to explain the significance of these and how the writing works. Generally, there was understanding and nearly always a high level personal response. In the best answers there was close analysis of language which developed interpretations, and linked with the way words had been used elsewhere in the poem. Candidates who were able to see the contrast between the poet's childish and adult perspectives derived more from the poem.

Question 17

This was another popular choice, with both poems being considered. Again, candidates were able to identify the imagery in the poems and make some valid comments about these. In responses to *A Birthday*, candidates did not understand that this was referring to a spiritual experience, and wrote instead about Rossetti's 'lover' or 'husband'. Generally candidates were able to analyse the language thoughtfully and see significance in the choice of objects used.

Question 18

The focus of the question is on capturing a moment in time, so candidates who merely provided an account or paraphrase of their chosen poem were unlikely to achieve high reward. In *Hunting Snake* there are specific time markers. There is a contrast between the snake's activity and the relative passivity of the human observers. There is detailed description of the observer's behaviour in *The Woodspurge*, and the acuteness of the poet's observations merit comment. What is going on in the poet's mind at the moment is the key to *Continuum*, and candidates may have commented on the particularity of the poet's observations and on the tentativeness of much of the diction. This question was less popular, although there were still quite a large number of responses. Those who selected *Hunting Snake* were able to produce engaged answers, which picked out several valid points about the snake, the background, and the poet's response. Answers to the other two poems were less successful. In *The Woodspurge*, some were able to see deeper meaning but a number of answers were muddled, only commenting on surface meaning. *Continuum* produced answers of varying degrees of competency. A number of candidates struggled to make precise points, and seemed to plod their way through this poem, making statements that identified features rather than meaningful comments.

SECTION C: PROSE

Wuthering Heights

This was not a popular text and so it is difficult to make any comment about performance.

Question 19

The power and immediacy of Lockwood's dream, such that it hovers between dream and reality, is compelling. At one point there is terrible violence, and the reader does not know Catherine's story at this stage and is mystified by the dream's significance. Heathcliff's intrusion and appearance are quite different to how he has been seen hitherto.

Question 20

Brontë makes these houses stand for the opposite poles of existence played out by the characters in the novel. Thrushcross Grange is an elegant house with a lovely garden, where the sun shines often. It is also a place of privilege cut off from common life. *Wuthering Heights* is a gaunt forbidding house, which seems to battle the surrounding bleak landscape and is constantly lashed by the elements. It is life at its most basic.

Question 21

Of course, Heathcliff is in despair. He is likely to be thinking that he has lost the only person who made his life worthwhile, that marriage to the contemptible Edgar Linton drained the life from her, and that this man will pay for it in full measure. His life's purpose is now even more a quest for vengeance against the Lintons and their kind, and Isabella is key to this.

Nervous Conditions

Question 22

Before this point, Tambu has given the impression that her aunt is almost cloyingly sweet, although there have been glimpses of another side of her from time to time. Here, the hint of some deep-seated and usually well-suppressed discontent becomes much stronger. Candidates' responses could range from sympathetic understanding of Maiguru's plight to condemnation of her for the compromises she has decided to make. Candidates understood the passage, but only the best answers grasped the ambivalence of Maiguru's

response at the end of the passage. Furthermore, few candidates discussed language, with only a few addressing 'In what ways?'

Question 23

Much of the interaction between Babamukuru and Lucia is characterised by the tension established when Babamukuru visits the homestead in Chapter 7 to discover that Lucia and Takesure have not yet left, despite his orders. Lucia is determined not to be ignored, and Babamukuru as a patriarchal figure clearly expects to be obeyed and finds it difficult to deal with a free spirit. Lucia uses her expertise and experience in dealing with men in dealing with Babamukuru. He is clearly perplexed by her behaviour at the *dare*, and is unable to deal with her effectively. Her manipulative skills are evident when she tells him she would like a job, although her gratitude seems genuine. This does not prevent her from straight talking in defence of Tambu, something which earns perhaps unexpected praise from Babamukuru.

Question 24

Nhamo as presented through Tambu's narration is not a very likeable boy. At this stage he is likely to be filled with a sense of his own destiny, and a self-congratulatory sense of entitlement. He may be thinking dismissively of his sister and possibly the rest of his immediate family. He may make a passing acknowledgement of his debt to Babamukuru, but such is his sense of his own worth that it is unlikely to figure too prominently. There were some appropriately nasty Nhamos! It was evident that candidates found it satisfying to get to grips with a character like this in an empathic response.

Fasting, Feasting

There were insufficient answers to these questions to make any general comments on candidates' performance.

Question 25

The extract is sad because of Uma's situation. She is dominated by parents and has to be 'disposed of' like a chattel. The quality of the suitors is depressing, as is their reason for pursuing her. Equally sad are MamaPapa's attitude and the way in which the bridegroom behaves. On the other hand the way in which Uma is prepared for the photograph, the way in which the suitors and their relatives present themselves, and the description of the wedding party are all comical.

Question 26

Arun's parents have unreasonable expectations and he has years of 'swotting' – he does not seem to have a normal childhood. He is virtually in exile in the USA where he feels completely alienated. He does not appear to have much capacity for making decisions for himself, but he seems a kind and considerate young man (with Mrs Patton for example) which makes us like him.

Question 27

Mr Patton will be thinking about this young man from a different world and his reaction to the food. The barbeque will be in the forefront of his mind. He may be thinking of his family and the impact this young man will have on it.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

There were insufficient answers to these questions to make any general comments on candidates' performance.

Question 28

In this extract Desai satirises officialdom's consistent placing of personal ambition before public good. The Brigadier dreams of fame and honour, and naturally thinks that a blunt military solution is what is required. The CMO wants to escape Shahkot and thinks that a drive against drink will redound to his credit in medical circles. The Superintendent of Police of all people wants a quiet life and to stay where he is, and hence declines the risk of offering any plan whatsoever.

Question 29

Desai's portrayal might be thought to convey a wide range of responses. On the one hand the reader might view Shahkot as noisy chaos where nothing works, corruption and inefficiency are rife, and life is a constant struggle with people living cheek by jowl. It might also be viewed as a colourful and vibrant place, where the inhabitants are lively and for the most part good humoured and neighbourly.

Question 30

How will this shy and ineffectual man, who has been gifted this post probably through his father, explain the hornet's nest he has uncovered? He is likely to be thinking in despair how to explain the mayhem created by the monkeys, the uproar created by the plans for their removal, the unexplained disappearance of the local guru and cash cow, and finally the loss of the cook who has served his predecessors with such diligence.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

The context is inescapable: Wilson's reaction to the death of Myrtle, Michaelis's failure to comfort him, and the information about the yellow car planted by Tom. The narrative of Wilson's last movements largely deduced by Nick or put together later, and the inferences about Gatsby's movements up to his discovery in the pool, are told dispassionately by Nick. He attributes all sorts of thoughts and feeling to Gatsby which can only be inferred. There is a sort of calmness and inevitability about the account of the death of both men which terminates in the shock of 'the holocaust was complete'. The fact that the shooting is not directly described makes the whole event more powerful. Generally, this question produced answers which showed candidates were well-prepared and had an overall knowledge of the plot. Most candidates grasped something of the 'dramatic climax', and the higher achievers were able to explore the writing in detail. Better answers were able to discuss the way it was structured, the way it lacked dialogue, the dramatic irony, the language, the understatements, and Gatsby's lost dream.

Question 32

Candidates needed to define 'careless'. They are careless about other people and their feelings, of the consequences of their actions. Tom is careless vis a vis Daisy and Myrtle. He is unconcerned and lacking in guilt about his adultery. Did Daisy ever really love Gatsby? She takes the first suitor to come along after his departure. They are also able to move on and resume their normal life at the end of the novel. This was quite a popular choice and again most candidates seemed well-prepared, with some knowledge and understanding of the characters. Although most responses were able to offer reasonable points of an argument, in many cases these could have been more detailed and better supported from the text question or novel. Weakest answers were unable to move much beyond stating that Daisy's 'murder' of Myrtle showed that she was a careless driver. Many candidates explained that because of Nick's comments at the beginning of the novel his view point was one that should be trusted, and then developed their arguments from there. Usually they were well supported and often quite personal. Some candidates however took a far too general approach and wrote about The American Dream without much detailed relation to the novel or the question.

Question 33

Nick will be thinking about the visit to the garage and the apartment on 158th Street with Tom, Tom and Myrtle and Daisy, and Tom's attack on Myrtle. He will be considering the implications. His reactions could be inferred from his usual voice.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 34

The context is not explicitly required, but is helpful in establishing the fact that the American does not speak Tamil and expects all Indians to be able to speak English. Muni has been giving a 'long peroration', none of which has been understood. The American's focus on the horse and Muni's lack of comprehension (he hardly even notices the horse because it has been there for so long) are comic, as are Muni's narration of his life history, and the incongruity of the American's proposed new setting for the horse in light of what it means to the villagers. This was quite a popular choice and produced a range of answers. Most candidates were able to grasp the humour in the miscommunication, and make some valid comment about this. In many

cases, though, candidates did not explore and analyse the passage in enough detail, and responses were general rather than detailed.

Question 35

(See general comments above). In *The Destroyers* the youth of the children, their lack of emotion, their lack of concern for Mr Thomas, and their enjoyment of the process of destruction are all worthy of comment, as is the effect on them of the War. In *The Rain Horse*, the way in which the horse appears malevolent and to be targeting the man, the almost surreal quality of it, the weather and the surroundings should be explored. This was a popular choice, in which candidates seemed to be quite fascinated with the boys' actions in *The Destroyers* and wrote with engagement. Nearly all candidates were able to comment on some aspects of 'disturbing', and there were some very perceptive answers which were enjoyable to read. Some, however, went off on a tangent about the parallel in the story to Nazism and Hitler. Although a few comments about this could have been relevant, it was not necessary to write about this in detail. Relevance to the question is the prime consideration. *The Rain Horse* was not as popular but candidates were able to grasp the 'disturbing' aspect, and included comments about the weather and the uneasy atmosphere.

Question 36

Harold will be thinking about his concerns about his father's financial difficulties, his relationship with him generally and the 'two faces', the obsession with the fly, and the end of the meeting and his father's final words. A few candidates chose this empathic question and most were able to convey the son's mixed feelings for his father. Background details showed that candidates were well prepared and familiar with the story. Some struggled to capture the authenticity of the text and sustain this throughout.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/51

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

General Comments

There were too few candidates this session to make meaningful comment on their performance. Please refer to Principal Examiner's Report for the June 2013 session.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/52
Set Texts: Closed Books-B

Key Messages

- In answer to Shakespeare passage-based questions, in particular, candidates should avoid generalised and narrative responses and should pay attention to the detail of the passage, including the language used.
- There were clearly argued responses to discursive questions this session, especially from candidates who used wide ranging supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations.
- The most effective answers to empathic questions showed knowledge of the moment, as well as producing a convincing and lively “voice” for the character.
- Candidates should focus on the question set rather than writing plot summaries, character sketches or commentaries on themes in the text.
- The strongest answers to poetry questions understood the content of the poem, commented on the language, and used extensive quotation.

General Comments

This session produced much lively and engaged work, with candidates showing both knowledge and appreciation of their set texts.

In answer to the passage-based questions an implicit awareness of the context of the passage is the best starting point. This should then be followed by an ability to explore the passage in some detail, and to comment on the writer’s use of language. The question must also be borne in mind throughout. Often candidates show sound knowledge of the novel, poem or play but do not relate this to the question.

Candidates would continue to benefit from an awareness of audience in response to drama texts. Many cite dramatic irony, for example, as an entertaining factor, but do not explore the effects this may have on those watching the play.

Work on poetry continues to improve, especially in terms of comment on language, structure and form, but there is also evidence of insecure knowledge of the basic content of the poems. There were many strong discursive responses to all texts, with particularly accomplished answers to questions on *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*. Answers were well-evidenced, well-balanced, and showed strong personal response.

Responses to empathic questions were strong, with many candidates showing a sophisticated awareness of their chosen character and of the context of the question. Voices were often very convincing, especially those of Brick and Oberon. Less successful responses showed limited ability to capture the character’s ‘voice’.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Paper 52

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Question 1

This question was answered successfully when candidates understood that the purpose of the visit was to encourage Maya to speak (after the assault by Mr Freeman had rendered her mute), and explored Angelou's writing. The strongest answers addressed authorial methods by selecting significant details such as the delicious food, the impact of literature, and the raising of Maya's self-esteem. There was a common misconception that being invited into 'the private lives of strangers' referred to Mrs Flowers herself, rather than to fictional characters.

Question 2

It was clear that the candidates who attempted this question had something definite to say about white people in the text, in particular the power they yield and the fear and intimidation they convey to members of the black community. The more specific the textual reference produced by candidates, the more convincing the argument; conversely, the more generalised and assertive the claims regarding discrimination and prejudice, the more unconvincing the essays became. A key discriminator was candidates' ability to show a distinction in how Angelou's presents whites, and how she offers a balanced view. There was not merely racism, bigotry, condescension and arrogance displayed by white people; there was also some compassion. The strongest answers ranged widely through the text.

Question 3

All responses here engaged well with the moment, with references to the sound of the dish crashing to the floor and Mrs Cullinan's reaction. Maya and Miss Glory's vulnerable position was alluded to, so too was Maya's rationale for her actions. Some candidates made an astute reference to Glory's given name and name change, using this as a useful contrast. The strongest answers showed awareness of Miss Glory's identification with the Cullinan family, as well as her understanding of Maya's viewpoint. Some candidates confused Miss Glory with Mrs Cullinan.

Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems

There were too few responses to this text to make meaningful comment.

The Siege

Question 7

Most candidates understood the context of the passage and could relate it to the novel as a whole. The best answers focused clearly on the power of the writing and the significance of the moment, selecting details such as Marina's 'cold certainty' and the repetitions in 'colder and colder and with less and less food'. Less successful answers tended to narrate, without looking at the style or the significance of the sugar in any detail.

Question 8

Strong answers to this question showed a wide range of knowledge and commented on how the structure of the novel, where revelations are often delayed, makes for a compelling portrayal of an intense relationship. Many candidates also commented on the effects of the developing viewpoint as Anna matures, and her relationship with Marina alters. Candidates were surprisingly tolerant of the affair, and many clearly felt sympathy for Marina's ultimately unrequited love.

Question 9

This question produced some strong responses. Most candidates understood Anna's position, showed background knowledge and recognised her mixture of emotions. Many conveyed her compassion and concern in at least an appropriate, if not always convincing, manner.

Brave New World

Question 10

Most candidates found this scene amusing, but some struggled in addressing its significance for the novel as a whole. Simple treatment of 'amusing' identified and described physical flaws in characters without commenting on them; more sophisticated treatment here explained how this was 'significant' in exposing societal and systematic flaws. Similarly, Huxley's situational and verbal irony was simply repeated by less able candidates, whereas more able candidates explained the irony both in terms of how it was created and how it functions.

Question 11

Clearly a sound knowledge of the text helped candidates here, with most citing the social stability, the absence of disease, free sex and absence of any family commitments, soma and the strictly hierarchical caste structure. Stronger answers explored the artificial nature of the happiness, and showed awareness of Huxley's ironic commentary.

Question 12

The best answers here showed sound knowledge of the moment and understood John's feelings. Voices were generally competent, but could have used more of his Shakespearian allusions.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 13

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a very popular text, and whereas most candidates tackle the passage-based questions well, there are still too many who seem to have little experience of exploring a passage in detail. It is not sufficient to outline the general context of the passage, or to look at it solely in terms of general themes. Moreover, a mere retelling of its events without relation to the question cannot gain high reward. The strongest answers looked at the entertainment value of Helena's comic self-denigration in her jealousy of Hermia; the comic reversal when Lysander awakes and addresses her in hyperbolic statements; Helena's entertaining belief that Lysander is mocking her; and the dramatic irony of all this as the audience know of Puck's mistake. Some candidates dutifully listed some of Shakespeare's literary devices, but did not comment on how they made the passage entertaining. A strong sense of audience anticipation or reversed expectations characterised successful responses.

Question 14

Successful answers to this question kept 'fascinating character' clearly in mind, and evaluated Titania's relationship with Oberon, the Changeling Boy and Bottom. The strongest cited her independence, loyalty and compassion for humanity as fascinating aspects of the play. Many were divided over her dealings with Bottom, some seeing this as a humiliating fall from grace and others as evidence of her passion. Less successful responses tended to write a character sketch and tag 'fascinating' onto her every action in the play.

Question 15

Responses to this question were interesting and varied. There were differing takes on Oberon's reasoning and motives for his mischief making. Usually Oberon was perceived as eaten up with rage and bitterness at Titania's defiance, but there were several confused and contrite Oberons with a sense of guilt at resorting to magic. The strongest answers captured his desire for revenge at that particular moment and used 'textual echoes' to create a convincing voice, whereas weaker responses tended to narrate events in a rather 'flat' way.

Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)

Question 16

This was a popular choice, and answered well when candidates had some idea of its context as a poem written by Queen Elizabeth 1, and referring to her own position. The strongest answers showed an appreciation that the poem is about love, and that the speaker's feelings are conveyed by the paradoxical juxtaposition of opposites and the powerful imagery. Such responses looked at diction and verse form in some detail. Many candidates expressed sympathy for the Queen's need to hide her true emotions. Less successful answers tended to misread sections of the poem, or to see it as a generalised comment on oppression.

Questions 17

This question elicited too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 18

Most candidates chose Wyatt's *They Flee From Me That Sometime Did Me Seek* in answer to this question. Successful answers showed a clear understanding of the poem, and commented on the patterns of imagery and strength of feeling about women conveyed by Wyatt.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19

A great many answers described this excruciating scene between Big Daddy and Big Mama, instead of analysing it. Strong candidates picked up on the key word 'striking' in the question, while others picked up on the ways in which Williams conveys the nature of the relationship. Most answers commented on the varying degrees of the 'dysfunctional' features of the relationship, ranging from rude and disrespectful on Big Daddy's part, to submissive devotion on Big Mama's part. Better answers probed the irony and the pathos inherent in the scene. Less successful answers wrote a general overview of the scene, without exploring the content or the language of the passage closely.

Question 20

The success of the answer here depended on an appropriate choice of powerful moments, and some detailed knowledge of those selected. Strong answers tended to concentrate on the scenes between Brick and Big Daddy or Brick and Maggie, exploring their drama and significance to the play as a whole. Less successful responses tended to lack detail from their chosen moments.

Question 21

Responses to this question were very sensitive and insightful, perhaps because it offered candidates the chance to tease out Brick's inner workings. Thus Brick's relationship with his own life and career, Maggie, Big Daddy and Skipper featured largely in the responses. Answers were generally well-developed and detailed, capturing some of Brick's characteristic features such as 'the click'. Less convincing responses made Brick care too much about the inheritance of the estate, or did not reflect his deliberate dulling of his senses through drink.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/53

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

Key Messages

- In answer to Shakespeare passage-based questions, in particular, candidates should avoid generalised and narrative responses and should pay attention to the detail of the passage, including the language used.
- There were clearly argued responses to discursive questions this session, especially from candidates who used wide ranging supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations.
- The most effective answers to empathic questions showed knowledge of the moment, as well as producing a convincing and lively “voice” for the character.
- Candidates should focus on the question set rather than writing plot summaries, character sketches or commentaries on themes in the text.
- The strongest answers to poetry questions understood the content of the poem, commented on the language, and used extensive quotation.

General Comments

This session produced much lively and engaged work, with candidates showing both knowledge and appreciation of their set texts. Work on *The Siege*, *Brave New World* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was particularly strong in many cases.

In answer to the passage-based questions, an implicit awareness of the context of the passage is the best starting point. This should then be followed by ability to explore the passage in some detail, and to comment on the writer’s use of language. The question must also be borne in mind throughout. Often candidates show sound knowledge of the novel, poem or play, but do not relate this to the question.

Candidates would continue to benefit from an awareness of audience in response to drama texts. Many cite dramatic irony, for example, as an entertaining factor, but do not explore the effects this may have on those watching the play.

Work on poetry continues to improve, especially in terms of comment on language, structure and form. There were many strong discursive responses to all texts, with particularly strong responses to *The Siege*, *Brave New World* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Answers were well-evidenced, well-balanced and showed strong personal response, and were often significantly stronger than answers to the passage-based questions on the same text.

Responses to empathic questions were accomplished, with many candidates showing a sophisticated awareness of their chosen character and of the context of the question. Voices were often very convincing, especially those of Maggie and Andrei. Less successful responses showed limited ability to capture the character’s ‘voice’.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Paper 53

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Question 1

Candidates dealt successfully with the content of the passage, with virtually all grasping the significance of the dentist's attitude. The strongest responses explored the passage and its language in some detail.

Question 2

This question elicited responses where candidates tended to select incidents which involved Maya and her father, rather than exploring how Angelou made the relationship memorable.

Question 3

This question was answered well when candidates captured Momma's restraint and religious faith. Most candidates were aware of the events of the particular moment.

Carol Ann Duffy: *Selected Poems*

Question 4

In answer to this question, the more detailed the discussion of Duffy's language and its effects, the better the quality of response. For this poem some of these details included: the ominous adjectives and menacing nouns and verbs; the surprising and disturbing fact; the pathos; the forceful imperatives and the incorrect grammar ('*Me not know...*') expressed as dialogue, in addition to the fragmented sentence structures; the persistent alienating use of the second person; and the possessive antithesis of 'your/theirs'. Occasionally, candidates wrote about loneliness, rather than alienation in a 'strange land'. Some candidates insisted that this poem reflected Duffy's own personal experience, but more considered responses used the literary term 'persona' to good effect.

Question 5

The candidates who did well here organised their answers to match Duffy's use of the persona's transformation in the poem from innocence to experience; with its growing ominous language, reference to the Moors Murders, and other adult themes. Insightful responses focused even more specifically on Duffy's use of 'developmental' language, which features as a motif.

Question 6

This was a popular question, and many responses wrote a clear argument as to why an onion is a surprising but effective symbol of love. The strongest answers used details from the poem, and responded personally to Duffy's unconventional portrayal of love and effective choice of images.

The Siege

Question 7

This question produced some strong answers which looked at the language used to convey Mikhail's feelings and Anna's observations. Less successful responses confused Mikhail and his colleague, and did not explore the significance of Mikhail's nightmare or respond to Anna's reference to the playground bullies.

Question 8

The discriminating factor here was the candidate's ability to focus on 'admirable', and to range widely through the text. Less successful answers tended to repeat Anna's selfless qualities or to focus on the three journeys she makes in the novel, without linking this closely to the question set. Surprisingly few candidates mentioned her bravery and patriotism in working on the Luga Line, or her job at the nursery.

Question 9

This was a popular question, and there were many excellent responses which showed a detailed knowledge of the text and of the moment. The best answers reflected the optimism of the novel's ending, whilst others reflected on the terrible winter Anna, Andrei and Kolya have miraculously survived. The strongest responses captured Andrei's medical background, his love for Anna and also something of his poetic Siberian soul. Less successful responses re-iterated the doom and gloom of the previous chapters, and made Andrei too unconcerned about the deaths of Marina and Mikhail.

Brave New World

Question 10

Responses to this question were very variable, with a significant number of candidates who seemed unaware of the context of this powerful and central scene. Several candidates thought men were whipping Linda or that she was whipping John. The strongest answers showed a full knowledge of the context, and explored the pathos of Linda's lack of understanding as to why she is being punished for behaviour which is completely conventional in *Brave New World* terms. Attention was also paid to the strength of the language which evokes sympathy for the characters. Perceptive candidates saw that, despite her conditioning, Linda shows love for John. Some candidates looked at issues such as Linda's physical neglect of John without any reference to her as a displaced person in an alien society.

Question 11

This question was generally answered well with some outstanding responses. The best showed an awareness of Huxley's purpose in making Bernard likeable at the start of the novel in that he represents the reader's views, but replacing him with John as central character as the novel continues. Bernard's selfishness, hypocrisy and cowardice were explored and evidenced effectively in the strongest answers. Several candidates interpreted the question as Bernard not being liked by other characters in the novel as he is different. Whilst a valid interpretation, it was a limiting approach which missed authorial intention and reader response. A balanced, well thought out personal response to Bernard reaped high reward here.

Question 12

The strongest recreations of Helmholtz understood that he wanted exile to a remote and extreme place in order to be with like-minded people, and to produce better writing. Many candidates captured his voice effectively but only a few really understood his position at this point in the novel.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 13

Many candidates here listed the insults and understood that the ladies were bickering. Stronger answers looked at the insulting language in detail, and commented on the context of the plot and the use of dramatic irony. Candidates did note the contrasts and the role reversal, but a development of points on audience awareness and staging would have improved answers. Candidates considering the events of the play could be encouraged to analyse their entertainment value in greater depth. Closer textual reference to the passage would also improve achievement.

Question 14

There was a generally sound understanding of Bottom's role in the play, but the best responses focused clearly on 'so entertaining'. The strongest answers were tempered by critical analysis of the social context, the dramatic irony of the various situations in which Shakespeare places Bottom, his naive enthusiasm for acting, and his comic misuse of language. Less successful responses merely outlined his actions, or missed obvious points such as his transformation into an ass and love affair with Titania.

Question 15

Many candidates created amusing voices for Demetrius, and showed understanding of his character and of the moment. Weaker answers tended to confuse Helena and Hermia.

Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)

This text elicited too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19

There were many good answers to this question which had a clear focus on the entertainment offered by the scene, relished the trading of insults, and looked in detail at the language used. The strongest answers were informed by a knowledge of the rivalry between Mae and Maggie, and an understanding that Maggie is being deliberately provocative. Less successful answers covered the background, but did not refer closely to the passage itself.

Question 20

Answers here were thoughtful and well-balanced. Reasons for and against sympathy for Brick were well-evidenced, and conclusions were sensitive.

Question 21

There were many appropriate and convincing voices capturing the essence of Maggie, her frustrations with her life, and her attitude towards her in-laws.