

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/11</b> <b>Poetry and Prose 11</b></p>
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## Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- Show a clear understanding of the deeper implications of texts.
- Select relevant material that answers the question.
- Integrate apt textual references to support their ideas.
- Explore sensitively ways in which writers achieve their effects.
- Write informed personal responses to texts.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- Show only a basic grasp of surface meanings.
- Work through ‘themes’ they have studied without focusing on the key words of the question.
- Use long quotations or a list of shorter quotations without comment on specific words.
- Log writing devices without exploring the effects created.
- Are overly dependent on explanation and assertion.

## General comments

There was evidence of outstanding work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where the most successful candidates showed insight and individuality in their engagement with the poems and the questions set on them. There were some examples of candidates who spent too much time on their first response, which adversely affected their performance across the paper. Most candidates were familiar with the layout of the paper, though there were examples of candidates answering several questions rather than two. There were instances, too, of candidates relying exclusively on the extracts printed in the prose passage-based questions when answering the prose general essay questions. Centres should ensure that their candidates turn up to the exam with an understanding of the question paper’s layout and rubric. Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting; this is essential in communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners, and it is important that teachers remind candidates about this.

The strongest responses showed the ability of candidates to select relevant material for the question that had been set. This is an essential aspect of the examination: questions should not be seen as mere prompts for candidates to unload all information they know about the poem or character or theme mentioned in the question. The strongest responses to poetry and passage-based questions showed that candidates selected their material judiciously whereas in less effective responses candidates wrote exhaustively as they worked their way through a poem or passage.

Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. This is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Some candidates wrote a brief plan before starting their answer, and this often led to a more clearly organised response. Those candidates who offered lengthy introductions, with extraneous biographical or social context material, simply delayed the actual beginning of their answer to the question. Some candidates were determined to state a writer’s themes at the start of their answers and occasionally during their answer even when this was not relevant to the question that had been asked. Some opening paragraphs included sentences which simply listed in a random way the devices the writer uses, which is not a productive way of beginning a response.

The most convincing personal responses embedded textual references to support the points being made. It was clear that many candidates had learned much direct quotation to use in answering the prose general essay questions. This not only provided support and evidence but also gave candidates the opportunity to

explore ways in which writers achieve their effects. The least successful responses to prose general questions included insufficient textual detail and an over-dependence on unsupported assertion. Candidates should be reminded that there is little merit in simply copying out long quotations or a list of short quotations. Some candidates adopted a misguided approach when directing Examiners to specific lines in poems and passages without making it clear which word or phrase was being referred to. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide the specific supporting detail from the text, and not simply line references. Another misguided approach could be seen in the use of ellipses in the middle of quotations which left out the actual word(s) that would support the point being made. The use of concise quotations containing the actual words that support points is more effective.

The most successful responses showed a confident and sustained analysis of ways in which writers use form, structure and language to convey their ideas. Less successful responses, particularly to poetry, simply logged features without close analysis of precise ways in which writers use these devices to create specific effects. The most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesurae, with broad comments made about an increase in, or slowing down of, the pace of a poem, though with no specific example given to support the general comment. Similarly, rhyme schemes were often said to aid the flow (or not) of the writing though without specific illustration.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

The most successful responses focused on the key word 'striking' and considered the variety of techniques employed by Auden such as the use of extended metaphor, hyperbole and personification to explore the enormity of grief. They responded personally to the key word 'grief' in sensitive and open ways. Less successful answers were descriptive and quite general, commenting on the need for silence and how important the deceased figure was to the narrator.

##### **Question 2**

Most answers were able to provide relevant examples to illustrate Adcock's portrayal of the people from Universal Lotteries. These focused on how the people from Universal Lotteries seem so understanding and sympathetic, how their explanations sound so reasonable and plausible and how they continually prompt the speaker to express her feelings. More convincing answers engaged with the language used, the repetition of 'they laughed', the impact of 'Have a nice day' and the conversational, relentlessly cheery tone.

##### **Question 3**

The strongest answers identified the tension between death releasing the narrator from her pain but also removing her from her beloved husband. These answers focused on 'movingly' and considered the personification of death and the idea of death 'wooing' the narrator as well as the power generated by the use of direct address in the poem. Less successful answers generalised about death and its ultimate inevitability.

##### **Question 4**

Answers to how Wotton vividly conveys how a person can become 'Lord of himself' largely summarized the poem and provided suitable references from the poem to support what they wrote. There was generally minimal connection with the language and effects used by Wotton.

##### **Question 5**

Responses which focused clearly on 'strikingly' were the most successful. These responses sensitively considered the imagery such as the motifs of the jawbone, cenotaph, the myth of Ouroboros, the personification of the sea and the references to darkness. Attention was given to Hughes' diction such as 'devours' and 'gnawn bare'. Answers which described the journey of the jawbone or provided biographical or contextual details were less successful.

### Question 6

The most successful answers responded personally to the key word 'compelling' with some engaged interpretations of 'Hawk Roosting' sharing their sense of awe, majesty and fear. They provided relevant examples from the poem illustrating how Hughes presents the hawk, addressing its place in the natural hierarchy, figuratively and literally, its place in the landscape itself, its relationship with elemental forces, its instinctive and assured behaviour. They usefully considered Hughes' methods of address to demonstrate the hawk's power and completeness and unpicked the metaphor of 'creation' and 'foot'. Less convincing answers described or asserted or generalised the life/journey of the Hawk and went through the narrative of the poem. They became hooked on a single focus such as the Hawk being powerful, egotistic, superior and turned every metaphor or image to this end, resulting in a repetitive response to the poem. Some offered a restrictive personal response to the hawk anthropomorphised as a murderer and others used the key words 'striking' and 'ways' to focus on the poem as entirely a metaphor for human hubris which would be plausible in an unseen paper but less so for a studied text of poems by Hughes on his readings of natural forces and creatures.

### Section B

### Question 7

Most responses showed a general understanding of the extract although some took a single point of view such as Kambili's nervousness approaching the prison or how Jaga was shortly to be released from prison and then paid little attention to the rest of the extract. Stronger answers focused on 'movingly' and provided a supported response to Kambili's thoughts and feelings. They considered the pathos around Kambili's continuing dependence on the figure of Father Amadi and his presence in the extract and in the wider novel. Candidates responded to Adichie's effects including the use of repetition in 'I always carry his latest letter', 'I no longer wonder' as ways into Kambili's character development and growing self-realisation. They recognised the significance of Kambili's relationship with God as an echo of Papa. The relevance of the extract to the whole novel was generally understood but with more successful answers assessing its importance in the relationships between Kambili, Mama and Jaja.

### Question 8

Candidates were able to describe the differences between Mama and Aunty Ifeoma in terms of character and actions. Stronger answers focused on 'strikingly' and pursued how Adichie achieves this. A thorough knowledge of the text enabled these candidates to explore the speech and mannerisms of the characters and compare the two households, one relaxed and the other repressive; they did so through the use of detailed and convincing evidence.

### Question 9

Some candidates responded to only one section of the extract, some choosing the first section, the arrival at Mr Jagers' office and the conversation with the coachman, or the description of the room. It is important to select material from across the passage to produce a well-developed response to the question. Stronger responses considered the large array of information available to assess Dickens' creation of vivid impressions. The viewpoints of the coachman and the imagined ones of the clients were considered in these as well as the use of language to create an overridingly dark atmosphere such as, 'gloomy', 'dismal', 'deadly' and 'like a coffin'.

### Question 10

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 11

Successful answers addressed the key words 'disturbing atmosphere' and 'this moment' with a supported response to the narrator's first journey into Manderley together with the responses and reactions of the staff, dogs, Maxim and Mrs Danvers. They responded to the dread and tension created by the 'disturbing' presentations of Gothic motifs, allusions to death, the sea and Rebecca. They considered Du Maurier's effects at the meeting of the narrator and Mrs Danvers as a dangerous and ominous episode for the narrator's well-being. These candidates understood the relevance of the extract to the wider novel, the foreshadowing of mysterious forces and events in the narrative and the shaping of the narrator's life at

Manderley. Less successful answers to this question tended to describe the events in the extract and repeated examples of death imagery.

### Question 12

Strong answers showed a clear understanding of the perspective of the narrator and how her fears and bias affect the presentation of Maxim and the reader's understanding of Maxim. The key phrase in the question 'Maxim so intriguing' was addressed with focused examples of the presentation of the character's behaviour, relationships and status across the novel. Candidates drew from relevant episodes, themes, narrative threads and symbolic motifs that offered evidence for the characterisation as 'intriguing.' They offered a personal response to Du Maurier's presentation of Maxim to show a critical understanding of why they were intrigued. Answers which did not focus on 'intriguing' and mainly described Maxim or focused on the narrator were less successful.

### Question 13

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 14

There were too few answers seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 15

The most successful answers focused on the question and were able to relate the themes of the extract to the wider novel. They appreciated Ashoke's fondness for Gogol and his attempts to communicate with him. The tension created by the contrasting dialogue both spoken and internal was recognised. Candidates responded to Lahiri's effects including the use of dramatic irony, the open/shut bedroom door, the motifs of Bengali/American culture and notions of belonging, the significance of the book gift and how each character responds to it. Answers which did not merit as much reward did not explore the detail of the passage; they tended to generalise about Gogol's name or focused on the train crash.

### Question 16

There were too few answers seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 17

There was a general understanding of Mrs Appleyard's antipathy towards Sara and some discussion of the unfairness of it. Some candidates, however, showed a lack of familiarity with the wider novel, and this limited their ability to explore the extract fully. The strongest answers addressed the key words 'memorably' and 'attitude' with a supported response to Mrs Appleyard's presentation as a harsh and unethical figure in Sara's life and the wider novel. They responded to Lindsay's effects including the use of irony around 'facing facts', the imagery of Olympus, the physical effects on Mrs Appleyard of Sara's existence, the tension of the interrogation and the abuse of authority and power. There was understanding of the extract in the context of the wider novel including the roles of Mrs Appleyard and Sara within Lindsay's themes of colonisation and repression, materialism, hypocrisy and liberation.

### Question 18

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

### Question 19

Successful answers responded personally to Pi's attempts to survive, addressing 'powerfully' through charting his mental, spiritual and physical well-being. They appreciated Martel's descriptions of Pi's fear of death for example, with the use of repetition, listing, rhetorical questioning, hyperbole, internal monologue and the anthropomorphism of Richard Parker through addressing 'convey'. There was much evidence of close reading of the passage in these answers. Less successful answers described the bait and food plan and Pi's fear.

### Question 20

Despite the clear instruction on the exam paper not to use the passage printed for **Question 19**, many candidates did so. This was inevitably limiting. Those candidates who moved beyond the extract often described how Pi's upbringing in a zoo facilitated his training of Richard Parker. Overall, candidates needed more detailed and specific knowledge and understanding of the text to answer this question.

### Question 21

The strongest answers focused on 'memorable moment' and the number of ways in which it could be regarded as such, the dramatic appearance of the widow and the way in which she is described. They also responded to the effects of the bluntness of her comments about the old will, her dead husband and her viewpoint on 'duty' and the shocking departure from the expected outcome to the story. These answers were able to relate to the whole text and frequently commented on the significance of the title. There were a few less successful answers characterised by narrating the story or commenting on how uncaring the children were or how selfish the mother was.

### Question 22

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/12</b> <b>Poetry and Prose 12</b></p>
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## Key messages

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Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. This is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Some candidates wrote a brief plan before starting their answer, and this often led to a more clearly organised response. Those candidates who offered lengthy introductions, with extraneous biographical or social context material, simply delayed the actual beginning of their answer to the question. Some candidates were determined to state a writer’s themes at the start of their answers and occasionally during their answer even when this was not relevant to the question that had been asked. Some opening paragraphs included sentences which simply listed in a random way the devices the writer uses, which is not a productive way of beginning a response.

The most convincing personal responses embedded textual references to support the points being made. It was clear that many candidates had learned much direct quotation to use in answering the prose general essay questions. This not only provided support and evidence but also gave candidates the opportunity to explore ways in which writers achieve their effects. The least successful responses to prose general questions included insufficient textual detail and an over-dependence on unsupported assertion. Candidates should be reminded that there is little merit in simply copying out long quotations or a list of short quotations. Some candidates adopted a misguided approach when directing Examiners to specific lines in poems and passages without making it clear which word or phrase was being referred to. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide the specific supporting detail from the text, and not simply line references. Another misguided approach could be seen in the use of ellipses in the middle of quotations which left out the actual word(s) that would support the point being made. The use of concise quotations containing the actual words that support points is more effective.

The most successful responses showed a confident and sustained analysis of ways in which writers use form, structure and language to convey their ideas. Less successful responses, particularly to poetry, simply logged features without close analysis of *precise* ways in which writers use these devices to create *specific* effects. The most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesurae, with broad comments made about an increase in, or slowing down of, the pace of a poem, though with no specific example given to support the general comment. Similarly, rhyme schemes were often said to aid the flow (or not) of the writing though without specific illustration.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

The most successful responses offered detailed analysis of the rich language and showed appreciation of how Thomas makes the poem moving. Candidates acknowledged the desolate mood and the isolated setting of the 'bleak hut' in the relentless rain. There was often sensitive response to the image of 'myriads of broken reeds', with some candidates suggesting the soldiers were 'broken' even before death, in terms of their physical and psychological resilience. Many candidates asserted that the rain represented bullets and washed soldiers clean of their sins and that the reeds represented dead bodies, though not always with careful exploration of the precise effects of Thomas's use of language. The least successful responses worked their way through the poem, explaining rather than analysing, with little focus on the key word 'moving'.

##### **Question 2**

The most successful responses focused on the key words 'disturbing impressions of the city', commenting on the rigidity of the design, the relentlessness of the building and the removal of any vestige of the past. Many candidates observed that the 'flaws and blemishes' are actually valuable 'fossils' and 'history'. There was much sensitive analysis of language, with candidates exploring the personification of the sea and sky and the extended metaphor of dental surgery, linked to the disturbing impression of the pristine and synthetic appearance of the city after treatment. The impact of the planners' activities on the development of the city is relevant to the question, though some candidates wrote almost exclusively about Cheng's presentation of the planners, with little or no focus on 'disturbing impressions of the city'.

##### **Question 3**

The most successful responses explored the ways in which Wyatt strikingly conveys his feelings, which is what the question asks for. These responses explored confidently Wyatt's use of antithesis, the paradoxical final line of the poem and the language of pain, suffering and death. Some candidates appreciated the wit and wry self-awareness of the poet. Some less confident responses were able to acknowledge the poet's inner turmoil and inability to achieve a settled state of mind, though without a focus on the key words of the question: 'strikingly conveys'. Some candidates took as their starting point biographical information rather than the actual question, often becoming side-tracked by digressions and assertions about the poet's affair with Anne Boleyn.

#### Question 4

In the strongest responses, there was a sustained engagement with the brutality of the speaker and his enjoyment in the violent act, evident in the word ‘chuckling’. There was much sensitive exploration of language, for example, with the wild animal motif suggested by ‘claws’, contrasting with the younger self’s innocence (and perhaps cowardice). Some candidates argued that the snakeskin simile symbolised a necessary shedding of childish romanticism and naivety. Some responded convincingly to the effects created by the nursery rhyme metre, comical tone and the references to Shakespearean comedy. The least successful responses were explanatory rather than analytical and took the murder literally.

#### Question 5

Most candidates showed an overall understanding of the poem’s content, including the setting: the darkness of the night, the silence of the room and the solitariness of the poet. Stronger responses explored the extended metaphor of the fox, its gradual and delicate approach representing the emergence of the poet’s ideas. There was sensitive exploration of the phrase ‘A fox’s nose touches twig, leaf’ and of the fox’s growing confidence in ‘And now, and now, and now’. Most candidates recognised both the suggestion that the ideas are outside the poet’s control and the power with which the ideas suddenly take hold. Less convincing responses digressed into generalised comments on punctuation or enjambment without linking specific points to the ideas in the poem and the key words of the question.

#### Question 6

The most successful answers selected relevant material without trying to write exhaustively about a relatively long poem. These responses focused on different aspects of the ‘early morning walk’ and the key words of the question ‘powerfully depict’. There was a detailed appreciation of the speaker’s sense of awe at the sight of these huge, still and silent creatures, with close attention paid to the description of them both before and after sunrise. The strongest responses explored the transformation that takes place at sunrise as the world comes alive, from the ‘grey silent world’ to ‘the sun (which)/Orange, red, red erupted’, the latter image being seen variously as beautiful or apocalyptic. These responses often engaged with the significance of the final two stanzas where the speaker resolves to draw upon the experience of this walk, its beauty and timelessness, in future years. The least successful responses worked through the poem in a narrative way, leaving insufficient time to explore the speaker’s walk after sunrise.

#### Question 7

Most candidates grasped the dramatic contrast in mood before and after the phone rang: the happiness of life at Auntie Ifeoma’s, the silent absorption in the card game, the laughter, followed by the abruptness of the phone ringing and Auntie Ifeoma’s scream. The most successful responses explored precise ways in which Adichie achieves her dramatic effects: the description of the scream and Kambili’s hand shaking and ears filling with liquid. Many commented on the dramatic transformation of a more assertive Kambili ‘grasp(ing)’ the phone and the implications of Mama’s voice described as ‘sound(ing) like a recording’. Less convincing responses worked through the extract paraphrasing its content and asserting that aspects were ‘dramatic’ without explaining why. Explaining why the moment in the extract is dramatic will necessarily require reference to elsewhere in the text. There were, however, many unproductive approaches that veered away from the question in the direction of pre-learned themes.

#### Question 8

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 9

The most convincing answers offered personal and evaluative engagement with the humour of the extract in response to the key word ‘entertaining’, commenting that observations were from the first-person perspective of the younger and naïve Pip. There was close analysis of the language: for example, Pip and Joe as ‘fellow sufferers’; the ambiguity of the description of being brought up ‘by hand’; the irony of the word ‘Tickler’ to describe the cane; Pip’s use as a ‘connubial missile’. Comedy was seen in the idea of Mrs Gargery washing herself with a nutmeg grater and in the repetition of ‘Ram-paged’ as Joe’s description of his wife’s anger. The least effective responses tended to work through the extract in an explanatory and sometimes literal way without acknowledgement of the humour in the portrayal of the two characters. Some candidates were side-tracked by overly general comment on gender roles (‘in those days’).

### Question 10

There were few very confident responses to this question. Most candidates were able to show some understanding of the character and his contribution to the plot. There was a tendency to focus mainly on the early and terrifying introduction to Magwitch as the escaped convict on the marshes. In general, many candidates answering this question needed a more detailed knowledge of the character's role later in the novel. The ability to deploy a range of learned direct quotations would have helped to improve performance in many answers; this would have helped to provide more convincing, closely supported, responses to this 'How far?' question.

### Question 11

The best of the responses sustained personal and evaluative engagement with the question, the detail of the extract and relevant links to elsewhere in the novel. There was confident exploration of ways in which Du Maurier portrays the narrator's naivety and Maxim's fury evident in his 'ashen-white' features and brutal commands to his wife. Candidates commented on the gothic elements that contributed to the power of the moment: Maxim's 'blazed' eyes; the guests as 'dumb things; and Mrs Danvers with the 'face of an exulting devil'. The strongest responses considered the strain of the marriage, the narrator's belated understanding of Mrs Danvers' cruel manipulation and the narrator's lack of identity in the world of Manderley. There were some responses that showed only a limited knowledge of what is happening and who the characters are in the extract; Examiners observed that these responses shared characteristics of unseen responses.

### Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 13

The most successful responses commented on all three characters in the extract. There was a clear understanding of the role of Townsend: his easy manipulation of Catherine; his 'light and breezy' manner; his proprietorial look around the room; the portrayal of him as a kind of predator on a fact-finding mission. There was often a less convincing response to Mrs Penniman, with some candidates taking her words at face value. The least successful responses provided general character sketches without analysing the 'ways (in which) James strikingly portrays' the characters. Some candidates would have benefited from making greater use of the detail of the extract printed for them in answering this question.

### Question 14

Most candidates attempted a balanced response to this 'To what extent?' question. It should be noted that balance is not a requirement; candidates are free to take whatever line they wish, so long as they inform their responses with support from the text. Some answers referred to the more implacable parts of his nature evident in his protection of his daughter and his forbidding manner, though lack of direct quotation led to overly assertive arguments. Some candidates asserted that Sloper's discouragement of his daughter's marriage to Townsend was a clear-cut illustration of his not caring for his daughter, disregarding the evidence the text provides of Townsend's unsuitability.

### Question 15

The strongest responses sustained a focus on the key word 'revealing', commenting on the deterioration of the relationship and Gogol's apparent cluelessness. Candidates explored the contrast between what the relationship had been like in the past with its troubling state now, with focus on the tensions showing that the relationship is beginning to disintegrate and has no future. Moushumi's preference that Gogol did not attend the presentation was often seen as a revealing turning point in their relationship, as was Gogol's feelings of abandonment as he roams around Paris alone. The least successful responses tended to re-tell the content of the extract and lacked an awareness of how the extract fitted into the overall novel, such as the foreshadowing of future events.

### Question 16

Successful responses showed an understanding of how Ashoke assimilated into American culture whilst still retaining as much Bengali culture as possible. They showed an appreciation of the accident as a turning point in his life, leading him to the naming of his son Gogol in gratitude. Most candidates referred to the arranged marriage, the mutual loyalty and respect of the married couple and the importance to Ashoke of his

successful working life. Less effective responses tended to ignore the importance of the character's back story and lacked a sufficiently wide range of textual references to support their responses. In the least successful responses, the focus was lost, with candidates writing more about Gogol than Ashoke.

### Question 17

In the most successful responses, there was an appreciation of how Edith's lack of intelligence was the basis for amusement because of her seeming lack of understanding of the seriousness of the event. Lindsay's use of humour was explored in Edith's interactions with Bumper and his frustrated endeavours to ascertain information from her. Many commented on her misunderstanding of the questions, the mixture of irrelevant and important information, and the slapstick comedy of the sandwich. These successful responses explored the significance of the red cloud and of the sacred nature of the rock and how this added to the foolishness of Edith's comments. Most grasped the difficulty Edith faces in discussing a teacher in a state of undress. The least successful responses did not engage with the humour of the extract and simply worked their way through the extract explaining content. Some candidates used the extract as a starting point for an extended digression on the position of women in colonial or Victorian times, thereby losing a close focus on the key words of the question.

### Question 18

This was a significantly less popular question than the extract question on the text. Stronger responses pointed to the significance of Sara's artistic talent and its lack of value owing to the school's narrow ethos. These answers explored the pathos of both her orphan status and the discovery of her death, together with the motivations behind Mrs Appleyard's cruel behaviour towards her. Some commented on the significance of her relationship with Miranda and the impact of her loss on Sara. Less successful responses showed a lack of detailed knowledge relevant to the question and, rather than focusing on the character's contribution to 'the power of the novel', offered simple and general character sketches.

### Question 19

The most successful responses addressed the key word 'excitement' with examples from the extract of how Pi reacted to this new emotion. They commented closely on Pi's attempts to survive, charting his mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing, using well-selected references for support. There was much detailed and sensitive exploration of the use of sound, repetition, listing, capitalisation and rhetorical questions in the extract. The strongest responses captured Pi's excitement at taming Richard Parker and explored the metaphorical implication that Richard Parker represents the animalistic side of Pi himself. Less successful responses tended to describe Pi's excitement rather than engage with Martel's methods in 'strikingly conveying' that excitement. Some candidates lacked familiarity with the extract and thought there was an actual circus ring rather than Pi imagining one.

### Question 20

Candidates were generally able to acknowledge Pi's terror of being alone with a tiger, his mental anguish of losing a family and the continual struggles to find food and water. There were few answers which provided specific textual evidence to address the key words 'extreme' and 'suffering' with the result that there was a tendency to narrate events without a clear focus on the question. Candidates generally needed a wider range of direct quotations on key aspects of the text which can be used to support points and analyse a writer's use of language, here, in 'vividly depict(ing) Pi's extreme suffering'.

### Question 21

The strongest responses addressed the key phrase 'unhappiness at this moment' with careful use of well-selected references. They explored Mr Shi's unhappiness as rooted in his own behaviour, such as his inability or unwillingness to adapt culturally, in relation to the issue of divorce and what many regarded as his unreasonable expectations of his daughter. Reference was made to the significance of the titular proverb and to his envy of Madam who, in contrast to him, finds communication easy. In explaining Mr Shi's unhappiness at this moment in the story, the strongest responses referred to other parts of the story that help provide an explanation: Mr Shi's unhappy marriage a result of his lies; his reaction to his daughter's phone call. The least successful responses tended to adopt a narrative approach, taking at face value Mr Shi's words in the extract, without understanding the context provided by the rest of the story.

## Question 22

The most convincing responses showed a personal and evaluative engagement with the key words 'vivid impressions', commenting on the character being strong, kind, maternal and protective. There was close attention to textual detail which subverts the expectations of both Roger and the reader, with many candidates reflecting on how first impressions can be mistaken and how Mrs Jones' response to the attempted theft turns out to be more empathetic than might be expected from her initial fearless apprehension of Roger. The least successful answers showed only a basic, general understanding of the story, lacking the detailed knowledge required to respond convincingly to the question's focus on 'ways in which Hughes creates vivid impressions'. Some responses began with a list of learned themes suggested by the story rather than attempting to address the actual question.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/13</b> <b>Poetry and Prose 13</b></p>
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There was evidence of outstanding work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where the most successful candidates showed insight and individuality in their engagement with the poems and the questions set on them. There were some examples of candidates who spent too much time on their first response, which adversely affected their performance across the paper. Most candidates were familiar with the layout of the paper, though there were examples of candidates answering several questions rather than two. There were instances, too, of candidates relying exclusively on the extracts printed in the prose passage-based questions when answering the prose general essay questions. Centres should ensure that their candidates turn up to the exam with an understanding of the question paper’s layout and rubric. Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting; this is essential in communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners, and it is important that teachers remind candidates about this.

The strongest responses showed the ability of candidates to select relevant material for the question that had been set. This is an essential aspect of the examination: questions should not be seen as mere prompts for candidates to unload all information they know about the poem or character or theme mentioned in the question. The strongest responses to poetry and passage-based questions showed that candidates selected their material judiciously whereas in less effective responses candidates wrote exhaustively as they worked their way through a poem or passage.

Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. This is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Some candidates wrote a brief plan before starting their answer, and this often led to a more clearly organised response. Those candidates who offered lengthy introductions, with extraneous biographical or social context material, simply delayed the actual beginning of their answer to the question. Some candidates were determined to state a writer’s themes at the start of their answers and occasionally during their answer even when this was not relevant to the question that had been asked. Some opening paragraphs included sentences which simply listed in a random way the devices the writer uses, which is not a productive way of beginning a response.

The most convincing personal responses embedded textual references to support the points being made. It was clear that many candidates had learned much direct quotation to use in answering the prose general essay questions. This not only provided support and evidence but also gave candidates the opportunity to explore ways in which writers achieve their effects. The least successful responses to prose general questions included insufficient textual detail and an over-dependence on unsupported assertion. Candidates should be reminded that there is little merit in simply copying out long quotations or a list of short quotations. Some candidates adopted a misguided approach when directing Examiners to specific lines in poems and passages without making it clear which word or phrase was being referred to. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide the specific supporting detail from the text, and not simply line references. Another misguided approach could be seen in the use of ellipses in the middle of quotations which left out the actual word(s) that would support the point being made. The use of concise quotations containing the actual words that support points is more effective.

The most successful responses showed a confident and sustained analysis of ways in which writers use form, structure and language to convey their ideas. Less successful responses, particularly to poetry, simply logged features without close analysis of *precise* ways in which writers use these devices to create *specific* effects. The most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesurae, with broad comments made about an increase in, or slowing down of, the pace of a poem, though with no specific example given to support the general comment. Similarly, rhyme schemes were often said to aid the flow (or not) of the writing though without specific illustration.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Overall, the key word, 'admiration' generated relevant personal responses. The most successful answers focused clearly on the question and provided insightful understanding of the speaker's admiration for her great-great grandmother. They commented convincingly on the direct and implicit qualities the speaker appreciates such as the great-great grandmother's calm but quick-thinking response to the crisis, or her passion for art. Stronger answers appreciated the artistic legacy left by the great-great grandmother. Less successful answers generally showed understanding of the poem but did not provide sufficient textual analysis. These answers often included unsupported assertions such as the great-great-grandmother did not love her children or that she was a single mother. Some candidates found it challenging to explain how the incident with the son showed the speaker's admiration.

#### **Question 2**

Most candidates provided engaged and empathetic personal responses to this question. The strongest answers sensitively addressed the speaker's sufferings and inner conflict as he reflected on his past. They noted the effects of the disease on the speaker's physical, emotional and mental health and clearly understood his helplessness in the end. These answers evaluated the impact of the writing effects, with detailed analysis of features such as the imagery of the body as a 'shield' and the 'avalanche'. Less successful answers seemed to follow a writing formula and laboured through each line instead of selecting a range of suitable points. A few answers were distracted with the historical details of the AIDS pandemic and wrote at length about the issue, which gave them less time to focus on exploring how words and images are used to powerful effect.

#### **Question 3**

Most answers made some response to the key word, 'sad', although few were able to develop a sustained answer which considered the 'ways' that Marston employed to achieve this. The most successful answers showed understanding about the transience of love, the speaker's grief and the passing of time. They showed appreciation of writing features such as anaphora, the ghost simile and the repetition. A few candidates commented on the significance of the title. Less successful answers showed some understanding of time but could not develop their responses beyond simple interpretations. Some worked through each stanza, which led to much repetition and paraphrase.

#### Question 4

The strongest answers understood the symbolic connection between the waterfall and the passing of time and the speaker's acceptance of the changes this brings. They picked up on characteristics of the different phases of the relationship from youth to older age. Strong answers appreciated and evaluated writing features such as the rich, sensuous language, the use of enjambment or the conversational tone.

Less successful answers showed some understanding of time but were unable to comment on how the speaker's relationship connects to this. These answers did not focus on the key word 'memorable' and often responded with a line-by-line, stanza-by-stanza commentary, meaning that the Examiner had to look for creditable points which fit the focus of the question.

#### Question 5

Strong answers recognised the natural and supernatural influence of the moon and noted the reaction of humans, animals and nature. Many of these considered the key word in the question 'powerful' and provided convincing supporting points such as the power of the moon to compel a 'religious hush' or 'petrified' animals. Successful answers explored the vibrant language in detail and showed appreciation of the religious imagery such as the wheat fields being ripe for harvest or the 'kneeling vigil'. Less successful answers tended to focus on superficial meaning and some did not seem to fully understand the apocalyptic or religious references.

#### Question 6

The most successful answers were sharply focused on the question and noted in detail the difference between the caged creatures and the jaguar. These clearly showed how captivity resulted in 'broken spirits', laziness and lack of purpose, except for the jaguar. Candidates wrote with engagement about the free, unbroken spirit of the jaguar, commenting perceptively on his wildness and ferociousness. Stronger answers confidently analysed the language and showed appreciation of a range of writing effects such as the imagery of the laziness and boredom or the violent movements of the jaguar. Many provided relevant and convincing personal responses. Less effective answers tended to log features and reference quotations but failed to develop an analysis or create meaningful inferences. A few candidates thought the 'crowd' was 'mesmerised' by the antics of all the animals and did not understand that it was the jaguar who was so captivating.

### Section B

#### Question 7

Almost all candidates responded to the key word 'sad,' and many were able to select suitable points from the passage to support this, such as the lasting impact of Papa Eugene's abuse in Kambili's dream; the initial disbelief of Auntie Ifeoma; the realisation that there would be no further opportunity for Kambili and Jaja to develop a relationship with their grandfather. Strong answers evaluated and compared the different reactions of the characters – for example, how Auntie Ifeoma's response reveals an unseen side of her; how this is a key moment in Jaja's character development or the withdrawn, reserved response of Kambili. Successful answers commented on the writer's choice of language, the description of the dead body and the language of the characters. Less successful answers tended to be narrative or to paraphrase. There were some misunderstandings about Kambili and Jaja's responses, for example, that Jaja's response was genuinely religious.

#### Question 8

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 9

Nearly all responses considered the question and selected a range of points to answer it. Candidates acknowledged the significance of this moment as a turning point in Pip's life as his 'great expectations' are to be realised. The most convincing answers noted the attitude of Jaggers, commenting on his language and behaviour, compared to Joe, who most agreed is the 'true gentleman'. They noted how Joe and Jaggers are presented as opposites and the delight of Pip at finally becoming a 'gentleman.' Less effective responses tended to work through the extract in an explanatory and sometimes literal way.

#### Question 10

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 11

Most candidates identified some aspects of what was significant in the passage. The strongest answers recognised the importance of Ben's revelations about Rebecca, the growing confidence of the narrator and the possible significance of Ben as a potential witness. They made perceptive comments about the motives of the characters and linked their ideas to the wider context of the novel. Successful answers paid close attention to the passage and responded in detail to language features such as the descriptive language, the drama of Ben's revelations and the imagery such as Ben's shells, Rebecca as a dark, evil person and 'snake'. Less successful answers ran through the passage without selecting relevant points and did not explore the writing features.

#### Question 12

Most responses to this question were evaluative and thoughtful. Strong answers balanced evidence of Mrs Danvers as a villainous character with empathetic considerations of the experiences of the character, and her loyalty to Rebecca. Candidates were well-prepared and provided relevant textual quotations and examples to support their points.

#### Question 13

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 14

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 15

The most successful answers sustained a focus on Moushumi's thoughts and feelings, exploring these in detail from the passage. Candidates noted her anxiety, fear, guilt and anger and relied strictly on the text for supporting examples. Strong answers responded sensitively to writing features such as the pathetic fallacy of the rain, the significance of the construction noise and work outside or the descriptions of the effects of the leak. These answers noted the significance of Nikhil's disappointing reaction to Moushumi in the last lines of the passage. Less successful answers tended to work through the passage without selecting points that considered the question. Some candidates were sidetracked into writing at length about the psychology of guilt and fear and offered assertive explanations about the motives and possible inner thoughts of Moushumi, which were not substantiated by the text.

#### Question 16

Responses were clearly engaged with the question. The strongest answers provided a range of valid points showing clear knowledge and understanding of Gogol's complex relationship with his parents. They explored points such as the contrasts in Bengali and American cultures and the effect of Ashoke's death on Gogol. Candidates were well prepared and included relevant quotations and examples to support their ideas.

#### Question 17

The most successful responses considered how this moment was so vivid and found examples in the text to address this. They commented closely on the spacious grounds of the school, contrasting with the details of the 'hideous' Victorian furnishings inside, the description of Mrs Appleyard and the various descriptions of the girls opening their St Valentine's cards. Stronger answers picked up on underlying implications such as Mrs Appleyard's lack of education. They explored language features such as the simile describing Edith Horton. Less successful answers tended to be descriptive or narrative rather than evaluative, and often did not address the question. Some candidates thought Mrs Appleby was a 'Head Master' and some did not understand the word, 'pompadour'.

#### Question 18

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 19

There were many strong answers for this question that were perceptive and engaged with both task and text. These showed clear understanding of why and how this moment is so powerful. They considered the range of Pi's feelings such as loss of hope, fear and his intense inner turmoil and many expressed a sense of admiration for Pi as he overcame his 'fearful trembling'. They took advantage of the rich language in the text to comment in detail on the descriptions of the 'burbling, belching', and 'hissing' sea; the tension created from Pi's proximity to Richard Parker and the images such as the knife-like claws. Less successful answers ran through the passage without focus on the question and did not draw out metaphorical meanings, for example of the 'darkness melting away', 'the rain stopping' or the significance of the tarpaulin.

### Question 20

Overall, this question was not answered well, as there was an over-reliance on the passage from question 19. This resulted in answers that were limited in the range of points made. The very few successful answers selected points from the wider novel such as the way in which Richard Parker was named, his life in the zoo, his predatory features or the way in which he ran off into the jungle when they reached land.

### Question 21

Most candidates were able to focus on the question and selected valid points from the passage to consider to what extent Afolabi made them feel sympathy for the narrator. Stronger responses commented on the narrator's sense of failure, his regrets and reflections on the past. They noted the many phrases in the passage describing the narrator as weak and helpless and commented on the generally depressed tone of his thoughts. Less successful answers did not consider the question and worked their way through the passage without a selection of relevant points.

### Question 22

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0475/21  
Drama 21

## Key messages

- Successful responses avoided lengthy introductory plot summaries and discussions of historical context and swiftly moved on to the task. They also avoided listing techniques to be addressed.
- A brief plan of key points is useful in keeping answers focused and a reminder of important material to include.
- Lengthy conclusions which simply repeat material from the essay are rarely useful. An additional new point and a concluding reference to the question is more likely to gain credit.
- Short, direct quotations from the text were the best method of supporting points. Some should be probed more closely and candidates should consider why particular language features were chosen.
- In passage-based questions successful responses contextualised the passage and then explored it fully, considering the effects of language and structure. References should be selected from the whole passage, including the ending.
- Successful discursive responses maintained a tight focus on the question, avoided re-telling the plot, and used precise textual references.
- Summaries of plot are unlikely to achieve high reward. Successful responses recognised characters as constructs and how authorial choices create dramatic effects.
- Less successful responses identified literary terms and punctuation without considering their intended effect on the audience or how they enhance the author's ideas.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage, and the audience's emotions, are essential in successful responses.

## General comments

Overall, there was a sense of engagement with the set texts and some excellent work was seen with learned material which had been assimilated and allowed many to offer independent interpretation.

Successful responses showed clear knowledge of the set texts and were able to demonstrate critical understanding, showing insight into characterisation, stagecraft, structure, language and the author's ideas. They focused on key words in the question such as 'striking' or 'fascinating' and interpreted such terms as 'entertaining' in their broadest sense, to include comedy, tension or drama. Stronger candidates showed sustained awareness that the texts are written to be performed onstage and considered their impact. By referring to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'book' candidates demonstrated this awareness.

Briefly setting the passage in context at the start of the response is essential in helping to show understanding of the structure of the text and how characters or themes develop. However, many candidates wrote over-lengthy generic introductions including such information as race relations in the 1950s, military strategy in WW1 or lists of the writer's techniques. It is very useful to teach the historical context of the play but focus during the exam should be on key words in the question, what is happening in the passage and an exploration of the writer's ways of achieving effects.

Exploration of the use of techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing was often successful. However, naming literary techniques with no exploration of their effects is unlikely to be rewarded. Similarly, referencing punctuation with no consideration of the effects in context is unhelpful in producing a successful response. Candidates should consider both stage directions and dialogue to maximise opportunities for demonstrating understanding of the author's craft.

Several responses had a tendency to interject with personal stories related to the text but not relevant to the question, 'I have a similar relative to Aunt Lily.' Personal engagement with the text is important, but this type of lengthy anecdote distracted from the question and wasted valuable exam time.

Time management was generally good, with few unfinished responses. There was a huge range in the length of answers, with some producing single paragraphs and making a limited attempt to respond and others writing at great length, covering extensive material with impressive textual support, both in passage-based questions and discursive essays, demonstrating how much can be achieved when candidates are well-prepared.

There were several rubric infringements on Paper 21 where candidates had answered two passage-based questions. When this occurred, both essays were marked and the higher mark was awarded.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This question focused on the impact Lily has on the Crump sisters and enabled candidates to consider the values she represents and to discuss the contrast with Godfrey's parenting and influence over the girls.

Most responses recognised the humorous presentation of Lily's drunkenness and the entertainment value of her physical actions, dancing with both the dummy and Ernestine, along with the volume of her dialogue indicated by the capitalisation. Stronger answers evidenced the contrast in the appearance of Lily as 'drunk and dishevelled' versus the 'pristine white' dresses of the sisters, their voices and actions, using the stage directions to illustrate how Lily commands the scene with forceful movements and dialogue. There were also opportunities to discuss tone – her teasing of Ernestine and how the mambo music is used to convey how Lily is lost in her lengthy and detailed recollection of her passionate night with Papo.

The scene affords a glimpse of Lily's joie de vivre, her free-thinking and independent character in contrast with the girls' caution and obedience. Despite his absence, Godfrey's restrictive presence is felt in their dialogue.

Stronger answers identified the tension created by this contrast in values and how the girls' expectation that Godfrey would appear and disapprove is entertaining and gripping for the audience. Sustained answers considered the contrast between the sisters and evidenced Ermina's competitive spirit versus Ernestine's restraint. They saw Lily as injecting a burst of activity into the drama, something welcomed by Ermina as well as the audience and reflecting Nottage's use of the character to represent values and options available to her young protagonists. Some candidates strayed from the extract into a discourse on the position of black women in the context of 1950s America

- (b) This question pointed candidates towards the character of Godfrey and his relationship with Father Divine but material regarding the whole family's response to this relationship was useful in defining how Nottage creates memorable drama and impact. Most candidates had the knowledge of Godfrey's loss of Sandra and his motivation for moving to New York and committing to his beliefs and could explain this but without referencing how this is revealed to the audience. Some candidates struggled to demonstrate how the relationship was presented on stage and a few reverted to solely using the passage from 1a) to illustrate how the girls respond to their father's beliefs and principles. Many responses showed personal sympathy for Godfrey's need for support and some for the girls based on material from 1a). Again, there was limited evidence of how Nottage elicits pathos and specific moments where this is achieved. Some answers diverted into lengthy explanations of race relations and attitudes to communism in 1950s America.

There were few answers which evidenced how Nottage presented this relationship in any detail. Evidence that was used included the notebook which appears as a visual reminder of Godfrey's reliance and the changing of the girls' names, and the restrictions imposed upon them on Sundays. Some commented on Godfrey copying Father Divine and marrying a white woman as evidence that he is unable to think for himself.

Few answers could identify how dramatic scenes are constructed around Godfrey's relationship with the Peace Mission and the conflict between Lily and Godfrey. Fewer commented on the revelation that the organisation is fraudulent and how this is finally revealed to the audience.

### **R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End***

#### **Question 2**

- (a) This question focused on a dramatic moment approaching the end of the play, enabling candidates to contextualise the scene and consider events preceding the fatal mission and also the following events. The passage elicited the full range of responses and most candidates demonstrated clear personal engagement and empathy with the moving events, Sherriff's presentation of the characters' grief and the brutality of war.

Most responses identified the contrasting responses of the characters to the loss of life and answers were differentiated by the range of details considered and how stage direction and dialogue revealed deeper implications and emotions that are not voiced. Most recognised the powerful revelation of Osborne's death and the character's importance within the wider play. The stronger answers considered how the audience are given the news and the tension created by the delayed revelation and Stanhope's slow entrance.

Stage directions were particularly rich in this extract. Many answers recognised the Colonel's delight and evidenced his ill-judged language and enthusiasm in contrast with Stanhope's 'astonishment' but restrained responses, maintaining his professionalism and continuing his duty but with bleak sarcasm. Many showed knowledge of the previous scene and Stanhope's reservations about the mission. Most identified the awkwardness conveyed by the dashes and hesitancy in the Colonel's speech and stage directions and the powerful tension created in this exchange. Stronger answers related this moment to Sherriff's critique of warfare: the detachment and indifference of those commanding operations from the reality of the front line; the lack of compassion for replaceable soldiers who become numbers rather than individuals.

Stronger answers considered the end of the extract and the exchanges between the Colonel/Stanhope and Raleigh. Many answers recognised the change in Raleigh's character and the loss of his former enthusiasm and naivety and engaged with the woeful inadequacy of medals for innocence or lives lost. Stage directions of bloodied hands, lowered head and inability to stand and speak offered much evidence to support ideas of trauma or deeper implications regarding guilt.

Symbolism of Osborne's bed and his personal effects provided a springboard to consider earlier or later scenes, the pathos of the family left at home, Osborne's stoicism, the dispensability of soldiers or Raleigh's later fate. There were similarly varied and equally acceptable responses to the final exchange between Stanhope and Raleigh and suggestions of the tone of Stanhope's request and the powerful end to the scene 'Must you sit on Osborne's bed?' The stage direction of 'their eyes meet' offered an opportunity to comment on the powerful change in the relationship.

A few candidates recognised the dramatic quality of the sound effects and lighting in the closing stages – silence, the very lights fading, the last shell, the booming guns and offered interpretation of how these are significant and create impact on the audience – recognising the extract as part of a performance.

Less successful responses repeated the mantra that Sherriff is representing his own experience and is revealing the futility of war, both of which are true but more precise points of his critique were more highly rewarded.

- (b) Too few responses to this question were seen to make meaningful comment.

### **WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman***

#### **Question 3**

- (a) This question focused on a moment where characters not only possess different values but also knowledge of what has happened in the preceding moments which is a source of 'uncomfortable' feelings for both Pilkings and the audience. Most candidates contextualised the passage and

provided a little appropriate cultural context, explaining the tradition and what Elesin's duty as the King's Horseman entails. Candidates needed to move swiftly onto the extract once this knowledge had been demonstrated.

Most responses identified Pilkings' hesitancy and broken speech as evidence of his awkwardness although some did not contextualise this and explain the source of his discomfort. Some addressed the stage directions signifying his shock at seeing Olunde and his comments on his appearing as a ghost. Stronger answers addressed the dramatic irony and the knowledge that Pilkings has already ordered Elesin's arrest and audiences may infer, if not clearly known at this point, that the 'terrible calamity' has already occurred. Stronger answers identified both the urgency in Pilkings' dialogue and Olunde's desire to see his father 'before he turns cold' which creates dramatic tension before the revelation of Elesin's arrest.

Stronger candidates engaged with the whole of the extract rather than solely Pilkings' awkwardness. The opening exchanges demonstrate Olunde trying to clarify his commitment to the welfare of his people and Jane's awkward reminder that he was disowned. The opening allowed these candidates to consider the broader ideas of colonialism that Soyinka is critiquing and the awkwardness of inequalities of power for the audience. Some candidates identified the irony of several of Olunde's lines regarding 'duty', references to his death and Pilkings' inability to 'understand – or help' and considered how these comments foreshadowed events to follow.

- (b) Too few responses to this question were seen to make meaningful comment.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) This extract is rich in detail and offered many opportunities to discuss staging, the audience experience and the comical characters. Most responses recognised the context of the scene and the gulling of Malvolio and could recognise his comical behaviour and social climbing. They recognised the visual comedy of characters hiding in the box tree and the audience recognising that Malvolio is unaware he is being watched and overheard. Several candidates misread 'she did affect me' as referencing Maria and others that the letter had already been read.

Stronger candidates could offer a detailed analysis of how Malvolio's lines present his fantasy and ambition as well as his vain character. Many quoted the 'Count Malvolio' to support this point but more thorough textual reference and close consideration of language revealing his pride and affectation marked out the best responses. These responses also ranged across the other characters, rather than solely Malvolio. Maria's instruction to 'observe' builds anticipation for not only the characters but also the audience for the comedy to follow. Her reference to the 'trout' and Fabian's 'turkey-cock' were popularly cited as evidence of their comical belittling view of Malvolio. Most candidates identified the exclamations and short interjections, but many struggled to engage with the language and meaning of the insults or the cause of Sir Toby's violent response to being reduced to 'Toby'.

Shakespeare's critique of social climbing, class restrictions and Puritanism featured in several stronger answers, and many contextualised the final lines referencing 'drunkenness' in relation to the earlier scenes. Clear, critical responses were able to relate the scene to ideas from the wider comedy: themes of appearance and reality, the overturning of class restrictions on *Twelfth Night*, and love, including self-love.

- (b) This question asked candidates to consider a central relationship within the play which is the source of much of the comedy regarding mistaken identity. Weaker candidates tended to recount the plot of the play in relation to the characters and produce narrative responses with little or no textual detail. Most could comment on the dramatic irony of Viola's disguise and the audience's awareness of Olivia's mistake. Many could recognise Olivia's fascinating swift abandonment of her vow to 'abjure the company of men'. Most answers needed greater textual detail and consideration of Shakespeare's language in presenting this relationship, which helps to keep the audience 'fascinated' and achieves different effects such as pathos or comedy.

Stronger answers could evidence Viola's motivation and method of wooing Olivia on Orsino's behalf and comment on her language. They evidenced her bemused response to Olivia's love as well as Olivia's active pursuit of Cesario and recognition that she has caught the 'plague'.

Sebastian's appearance and marriage to Olivia was often used to support ideas of the shallowness and superficiality of love. Structurally, some candidates recognised that this relationship created many of the comic confusions to follow, including the tensions in the duel scene and culminating in the resolution scene. Critical responses effectively related the focus of the question to wider themes of the play such as mistaken identities, gender confusion and love's madness.

Many answers tried to link relevant context to their ideas, commenting on prohibitive same-sex or cross-class relationships and Shakespeare pushing boundaries. Candidates must remember not to pursue such material at too great a length and at the expense of thorough textual support and analysis of Shakespeare's language. Several lost sight of the comedy at the heart of the play and saw it solely as a serious treatise on Elizabethan society.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

### **Question 5**

- (a) The extract taken from the closing stages of the tragedy offered an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of the final positions of the characters in relation to their earlier contrasting presentations. Some spent too much time writing about what we know about the characters from the rest of the play, rather than focusing on the extract itself. Most recognised Othello's remorse and acknowledgement of his crime along with Iago's unusual brevity and refusal to speak. Answers were differentiated by the level of detail and the deeper implications of the language used by, and about, characters. Several candidates misread 'damned slave' as referencing Othello, leading to comments on racism, and 'I am not sorry' as Othello's lack of guilt for killing Desdemona.

Answers were generally successful in identifying that Iago is finally recognised as a villain, and Othello's former love for Desdemona has returned, and could comment structurally on how these character developments are powerful and satisfying to an audience. This was an extract rich in language. Weaker responses identified the exclamations as signifying grief and many candidates recognised 'he that was Othello' and Lodovico's assessment as striking in showing the hero's fall from grace. Most candidates recognised the hellish imagery as strikingly revealing Othello's recognition of his crime as well as Iago's demonic character. More subtle responses identified the imperative graphic verbs demanding his punishment. 'All in honour' offered many candidates an opportunity to show understanding of Othello's motivation. Candidates offering a critical view of the text suggested his defence of being an 'honourable murderer', and his apportioning blame to Iago for 'ensnaring' him, evidences incomplete realisation or remorse. They also acknowledged his confession and recognition that he has reached his 'journey's end', foreshadowing his later suicide. Few commented on the inclusion of his apology to Cassio.

Perhaps because of time restraints, Iago's role in the scene was often underdeveloped. Many commented that his 'villainy' is now out in the open and several commented effectively on the significance of 'viper' in relation to Iago's role in the wider play. The irony of his silence after wreaking havoc with language was striking to many candidates. Stronger answers recognised his taunting of Othello in both his lines. Some candidates offered a personal response that this retention of evil power and Iago's gloating is striking and disturbing to the audience, especially when juxtaposed with the disarmed Othello's weakness. The enigmatic 'what you know' prompted different interpretations, including being addressed to the audience who have been privy to his plan throughout.

- (b) There were some strong responses to the question and many candidates clearly engaged with the character and the issues raised regarding gender inequality. Some, however, explored context in too much detail, writing generally on women's roles and relationships with their husbands in Venetian society. There was also some insecurity about how much Emilia knew about Iago's plan.

Most candidates identified the tragic impact of Emilia passing the handkerchief to Iago and understood Emilia's motivation to please Iago's 'fantasy'. They also recognised her strong defence of Desdemona in the denouement and how this enables the truth to be revealed to all. Stronger answers could range across the play more fully and evidence her seeming powerlessness in the initial scene in Cyprus and her minimal response to Iago's misogyny. They could evidence how she contributes to the central theme of jealousy, apparently motivating Iago's plan and also recognising it in Othello and warning Desdemona. Many candidates engaged well with Act 4's 'Willow' scene and explored the impact of Emilia's lines advocating gender equality and sexual freedom in contrast with Desdemona's innocence. Some claimed that this revealed she was unfaithful, taking

comments out of context, or pursued this line of argument and Shakespeare's feminist leanings too lengthily, at the expense of other scenes with dramatic impact.

A few were able to comment on the dramatic impact of Emilia ironically recognising that 'some wretch' has planted the idea of Desdemona's infidelity in Othello's head, and creating tension when she wishes a 'halter' for that person and demands that 'hell gnaw his bones'. More were able to recognise the strength of her character in the final scene. Candidates often cited her actions as affecting the plot or related them to Shakespeare's social commentary but omitted to consider the impact she has on the audience. Her defiance of Othello's threats and her abuse of him is hugely dramatic and welcomed by the audience, as is her refusal to be silent and to 'charm' her tongue when demanded by Iago. The stronger responses recognised the character's growing strength through the course of the play and the significance of her greater loyalty to Desdemona and to justice than to her husband and expectations of obedience. The pathos of her final lines, singing the willow song and lying with Desdemona, featured in some answers which were more anchored to the audience experience and the genre of tragedy. The key words in the question, in this case 'dramatic impact', needed to be revisited regularly to fulfil the assessment criteria.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0475/22  
Drama 22

## Key messages

- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, sustained the link, and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Opening paragraphs should be brief and avoid lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- In passage-based questions, successful answers briefly stated the context of the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful answers to the discursive questions maintained a sharp focus on the question and could refer to specific incidents from across the whole text.
- Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.
- An awareness of the text as drama and appreciation of the play onstage are a prerequisite of successful responses.

## General comments

Many candidates showed an extensive knowledge and demonstrated enjoyment of their set texts engaging with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on characterisation, stagecraft, mood and tone. It was pleasing to see how many candidates offered a genuine personal response to the plays, supported by detailed knowledge and apt textual support.

The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*. There was a considerable increase in candidates choosing to write on Lyn Nottage's, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. *Journey's End* remains a popular choice on the 0992 syllabus. There was one new text this series, Wole Soyinka's, *Death and the King's Horseman*, with very few responses seen. Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Candidates should be reminded that background information should be brief and relevant to the question. In answering questions on *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, lengthy introductions about the Civil Rights Movement and social and racial prejudice in the United States were unlikely to gain reward. In *Journey's End*, some candidates introduced responses with biographical notes on Sherriff, his war experience and historical facts about World War 1. Contextual background to historical plays should have some balance so simply asserting contemporary views that the men were fighting a 'futile war', and that it was portrayed as 'honourable', when we now know it was not, and that the 'men died for nothing,' is also unlikely to gain high reward. Candidates who focused on the text and the relevant points in the passage-based question, with Osborne's reference to the '*two warring parties*' being organised, and the poignant likelihood that they would not live to see another summer back home, were able to argue the case for the 'futility' of war more strongly. Similarly, in responses to *Iago*, some candidates lost focus on the character as a construct of Shakespeare and included lengthy detail about Machiavelli's, *Il Principe*, losing focus completely on the actual question.

It is essential that candidates read the question carefully and think about the implications before starting to write. It was pleasing to see an increase in candidates writing a brief plan to help them to select the most important points to include, and the most suitable material to use to support these points. When answering the passage-based question, the whole passage should be read to avoid missing key points. For example in **Question 5a** of *Othello*, many candidates missed his likely safety in the last line of (*Within: A sail, a sail, a sail!*). Successful answers wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example,

'fascinating', 'dramatic', 'striking' or 'vividly'. These were used to help them to select the most suitable material to answer the question and a link to the question was sustained throughout their answer. Less successful answers appeared to use a discussion of themes as a way of addressing the question and language; these discussions were not always relevant, tended to detract from the actual question and did not encourage a more appropriate selection of material to answer the question.

Too often, candidates wrote lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot or listing issues, including a list of the techniques the writer had used, including punctuation, which they would analyse in their answer. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. However, whilst some candidates understand and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. In an examination with 45 minutes to write a response these are unproductive ways to start an answer and there is little to reward in responses which list the range of punctuation the writer uses in the text. For example, what is an Examiner to make of comments like these in scripts: '...the use of exclamation marks makes this scene dramatic...' or '...the use of comma and semi-colon creates an almost asyndetic list as Trotter worries for Stanhope...'? The most successful answers explored the use of techniques in context to show a clear understanding of the effect achieved: for example, the use of pauses in **Question 2a** to indicate the speaker thinking about how to change the subject to a less awkward one.

Candidates need to remember that drama is visual and uses language that has an impact on an audience. The most successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as performance, referring to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. These were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts. Successful responses focused clearly on dramatic impact and how the audience were made to feel. There was successful reference to dramatic irony, foreshadowing, tone and stage directions. Candidates who focused on stage directions, and what they conveyed to the character, and watching audience, as well as the impact of asides and soliloquies were able to demonstrate greater awareness of drama. Less successful responses whilst making some valid comments on methods tended to limit the effects to, 'make the audience interested to see what happens next'. Whilst seeing a production is a valuable experience, contributing to a clearer understanding of text as performance, candidates need to remember that responses should focus on the text and not on the range of films, or live performances, they have seen. There is no requirement that they write about how they would direct scenes, how characters should deliver lines, behave or move around the stage.

Most candidates know that close reference to the text and relevant quotations are needed to support ideas to achieve highly. However, some candidates work through the extract, line by line, writing out a quotation and then offering paraphrase, sometimes followed by the statement: 'which makes it such a dramatic moment in the play', without exploring how it is made dramatic. To achieve a coherent, relevant response to the question, the argument should come first, followed by a supporting quotation, containing a link to the task. Candidates should explore language in context and not choose one or two words to analyse with little or no concept of their significance in the text. For example, in **Question 5a**, many candidates highlighted the words, 'heaven' and 'pray', devoid of any context and commented on the importance of religion and heaven and hell in Shakespeare's time, failing to understand that the reference to heaven regarded the storm preventing the speaker from seeing anything between the sky and the sea.

There were very few rubric infringements on component 2 which was pleasing to note, particularly with the change to the rubric for syllabus 2010. Where seen, these were invariably due to candidates answering on two passage-based questions instead of one passage-based question and one discursive. In these instances, both essays are marked but only the higher mark awarded. Time management was good with very few unfinished responses seen. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text and to remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of the response.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This was a very popular text and question, eliciting many sensitive and thorough responses which explored the whole passage in depth. There was much unhappiness conveyed here and the most successful responses covered a range of the causes, supporting ideas with well-selected

references and close analysis of how the writer conveyed them. Most candidates understood how Godfrey's grief at the loss of his wife, Sandra, has made him dependent on the Christian leader, Father Divine, allowing no entertainment on Sundays. This has made him wary of white people as seen in his misguided attempts to protect his daughters from visiting the Levys' because *'They white'* and by his reference to the *'Scottsboro boys'*. This has led to isolation and a lack of normal teenage entertainment for his daughters with no TV or radio to listen to at home, or by visiting the Levy's in the apartment above.

The best answers explored the stage directions and Ernestine's 'narration', breaking the fourth wall. Some argued effectively that the family's unhappiness is a result of them being unable to express their emotions: Godfrey attempts to *'restrain his sobs'* and writes in his notebook; Ermina's twitching leg indicates her repressed stress – she wants to go to the Levy's which is forbidden, and Ernestine talks to the audience giving her personal thoughts and commentary on what's happening. She is able to voice what the audience already sees: Father Divine's hypocrisy in marrying a *'spotless white virgin'*; her sarcasm at the sounds of the Levy's laughter, *'only white folk can laugh on Sunday'*; Godfrey's bribery of them with cookies rather than giving of himself; the lack of hope for the future which is always *'on the horizon'*, never *'here'*. Some were critical of Godfrey's failures as a father, ignoring the fact that he is grieving the loss of his wife and the children's mother, and trying his best as a single parent.

Less successful responses focused predominantly on racism, both the racial treatment of African-Americans and Godfrey's anti-white feelings. Too often these digressed making extraneous points about race relations and Jim Crow laws rather than focusing on the question and passage. Weaker answers worked through the passage with little focus on their 'unhappiness', believing that the Crumps did not have a radio when in fact, there is one in the flat, which remains switched off and poignantly acts as a reminder of the dead mother who won it.

- (b) This was not as popular as 1a. This question encouraged and resulted in some genuine personal responses. Responses ranged from brief character studies with little focus on what there is to admire about Lily, to detailed critical responses focusing closely on the terms of the question, *'To what extent'* does Nottage's portrayal persuade the audience to admire her. The most successful responses gave balanced views of Lily starting with her admirable qualities: her confidence and fashion choices which are empowering for the girls and her communist views in trying to stand up for workers' rights. Features of these responses were perceptive comments questioning how genuine her communism was whilst admiring her for not letting Ernestine parrot her views, encouraging her to hold her own views and to get educated. There was understanding that there was little place for a powerful black woman either in her home community or in a white dominated USA.

Lily's dramatic entrance as she burst on the scene with, *'Who? Precious. If that ain't a question! It's me,'* was noted and it soon became clear that this vibrant and glamorous figure was homeless and hungry. She was seen as admirable for standing up for Ermina as a mother-figure, straightening the girl's hair *'just like mama used to'*, someone to inspire them and for the fun she brought into their lives which contrasted sharply with Godfrey's ideas for their upbringing. Better responses moved on to explore her less admirable qualities: her alcoholism and drug-taking; untruthfulness and laziness; jealousy of Gerte and her behaviour over Ernestine's graduation dress. Godfrey's unhappiness at her presence as she mocks his new life and sobriety was also explored. Her sad demise was only mentioned in a few responses, testament for a few candidates, that overall, Nottage generated more sympathy than admiration for Lily.

Less successful responses focused on her admirable qualities in bringing laughter into the girls' lives with her drunken dancing, sexual banter and undermining of Godfrey's behaviour but without exploring both sides of the character and with little textual detail to support ideas. Some responses totally overlooked anything but the positive qualities and, if mentioned, were sympathetic of her weaknesses.

## R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 2

- (a) This was a very popular text and question with a wide range of excellent answers. The most successful responses read the question carefully and understood the focus was on how the characters were 'strikingly portrayed'.

Most candidates responded with sensitivity to Trotter and Osborne recognising the unease at the beginning of the passage and the need for coping mechanisms. They understood the context of the moment, the morning after Stanhope's heavy drinking session, referred to by Trotter in the passage. There was critical understanding of the anxiety created by the silence, the knowledge of the 'Big attack' and the dramatic impact of their different responses to the silence and to Stanhope. Their caring natures and concern for Stanhope were explored. Better responses understood the nuances of Trotter's words, arguing that he was not simply condemning or gossiping about Stanhope, lowering his voice not to be heard, but was relating his concern. The best responses recognised the change of subject which led to a brief nostalgic escape from the war as the two men shared their memories of their gardens at home. Many candidates pointed out that this made them seem 'like normal human beings just like the audience', with a life beyond the war they hoped to return to.

Most candidates recognised the role played by Osborne who listened with interest, responded encouragingly and shared Trotter's memories, allowing Trotter to enjoy his moment. Trotter's lengthy sentences, humour and use of food as a coping mechanism, with his swift change of topic from the Boche to his jam were noted. This was contrasted to Osborne's brief comments to change from awkward topics; from preparations for the raid and Stanhope's drinking to the weather and gardening. The men's use of dashes and pauses were explored effectively with some sensitive detail to the way Osborne responds to Raleigh's 'lowered head' with his brief '*Did he?*' before moving on to talk of the sun. Osborne's care of his men and his plants and Trotter calling him 'Uncle' were all selected as indications of his caring nature.

There was some close detail to the language, stage directions and the symbolic use of light and the sun, patriotism in the colour of the flowers and the cycle of life with their hopes for the summer. More perceptive answers pointed out how weak the sun was and the pathos that they are not going to see the summer sun they long for.

Whilst there was awareness of the two men's different background and social class, less successful candidates were confused about Trotter's speech and argued he 'could not speak properly' as he was of a 'lower social class', rather than specifically the fact that he drops his 'itches'. The weakest responses worked through the passage commenting on what was 'striking' about the war and dugout, rather than what the audience learns about the characters at this moment. There was confusion between the two men and their fear and anxiety were exaggerated. Some considered Trotter was a simple-minded man whose main role was to provide comic relief and could not understand why he should change from talking about the war to ask for the jam.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question but most candidates were able to engage with the relationship in detailed, personal responses. Most answers traced the friendship in a chronological manner, knew the text well and were able to identify key scenes where the relationship is clearly portrayed: Raleigh's arrival and initial conversation with Osborne; Stanhope's horror on seeing him; the censorship of the letter; the climatic scene after Osborne's death and the final scene following Raleigh's fatal injury and ultimate death. The most successful answers showed critical understanding and the dramatic impact as the hero-worshipping young boy, just out of school, arrives and is unaware of how the war has changed Stanhope. Better answers explored his enthusiastic comments about Stanhope and ironic recounting of Denis's anger at the boys' drinking at school. They explored Osborne's subtle attempts to forewarn Raleigh that Stanhope might have changed.

There was understanding of the compelling nature of the friendship and the deeper reasons for Stanhope's shock at having Raleigh join his company: his insecurity and shame at being 'found wanting'. Better answers explored the powerful moment when Osborne comforts and supports Stanhope after Raleigh's arrival, and by reading what Raleigh had written about him. His fear that Raleigh would have informed his sister, Stanhope's girlfriend, that he was an alcoholic and a monster, proved to be totally unfounded. The dramatic nature of Stanhope's language here as he demands the letter, '*Give me that letter,*' and the stage directions, '*shouting*' and '*trembling*' and at other times, were frequently highlighted.

Stanhope's powerfully dramatic reaction to Osborne's death and furious conflict with Raleigh were also effectively explored. The best answers understood Stanhope's underlying concerns for Raleigh in his attempt to prevent Raleigh going on the raid by offering to go himself, and particularly following Raleigh's fatal injury. There was some sensitive detail to their use of first

names 'Jimmy' and 'Denis', in Raleigh's final moments as it re-established the intimacy of their pre-war relationship. This was contrasted with Stanhope's previous anger at the use of his first name as he now desperately tries to keep the dying Raleigh comfortable.

Less successful answers were unable to recall specific textual details to support points. This resulted in general comments on their friendship and much retelling of the scenes where Osborne puts Stanhope to bed or calms him down when he is angry over the prospect of Raleigh informing his sister of Stanhope's drinking problem.

### **WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman***

#### **Question 3**

- (a) A relatively small number of candidates answered this question. Most candidates were able to engage with Elesin's arrogance, love of women, selfishness and the extent he would go to in order to satisfy his desires. They understood the importance of keeping Elesin happy and the context of being the King's Horseman. The most successful responses condemned his love of life and the irony in him believing he was a '*man of honour*' whilst taking advantage of his position to satisfy his lustful desires. They saw the warning signs that Elesin was not ready to make his journey through ritual suicide, and Iyaloja's understanding of this. Better answers focused on the ways Soyinka made this dramatic, exploring the hyperbole in describing the woman he desires, and the women being unable to understand his poetic use of language. His manipulation of Iyaloja and her reasons for not refusing his request for her son's betrothed were understood – the catastrophic impact on the future of Yoruba society if Elesin failed in his duty. For some candidates the treatment of the young woman was the most dramatic aspect of the passage as her consent was neither sought nor given.

Less successful responses worked through the passage explaining what was happening with little focus on the dramatic nature of the moment or understanding of the language.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question but all found Simon Pilkings to be arrogant in his total disregard for the Yoruba people and culture. Candidates engaged with the terms of the question and most conveyed their hatred for his sacrilegious actions in appropriating Yoruba Egungun costume for a 'fancy dress party' to impress the prince. This was contrasted to the Yoruba King's journey to the underworld, without his Horseman, whose ritual suicide was delayed due to his arrest by Pilkings. There was some comment on his prejudiced language and disdain for Yoruba and Muslim beliefs considering them '*nonsense*' and '*mumbo-jumbo*'. Both his offensive language to describe the people as '*sly, devious bastards*' and his arrogant attitude towards his wife were strongly criticised. Better answers offered a balanced approach, respecting him for doing his duty as the British Colonial District Officer, noting his assistance to Olunde and acknowledging his misguided attempt to save a man from performing what he considered a barbaric act of suicide rather than a ceremonial death ritual.

Weaker responses gave a character study and were unaware of his job, with some thinking he was a police officer. They portrayed him as a stereotypical white racist without any personal engagement or comment on how this made them feel about him.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) This was a popular text and question and there was a wide range of work seen. Many candidates responded to this question by providing a description of Viola in the passage, rather than focusing on how her introduction is striking. Most understood that after the shipwreck, finding herself in a strange land, she has to use her wits to find employment and provide a safe future for herself.

The most successful answers considered her independent spirit, courage and confidence, as seen in her swift change of mood from being mournful over the loss of Sebastian to one of optimism for the future. Her distress was noted and stronger responses linked this more explicitly to the ideas of female assertion and Elizabethan views of women. They were able to compare Viola's and Olivia's responses to the loss of a brother and commended Viola for her down to earth and unconventional approach within Elizabethan society. Better answers understood Shakespeare's methods in setting up later events with the introduction of both Olivia and Orsino, and the idea of unrequited love.

They understood her dramatic function as she establishes the central themes of appearance versus reality and mistaken identity. Most candidates quoted Viola's words, '*Conceal me what I am*' and explored her decision to disguise herself as Cesario, commenting on the staging and the foreshadowing of later events, but without losing focus on the passage.

There was some close reference to the language and dramatic impact of the passage. The initial shipwreck provided drama with the possibility that Sebastian might be alive leading the audience to imagine the confusion should he reappear later in the play. There was close attention to Viola's inquisitive nature, her rapid questioning of the captain, and her ability to change plans quickly from initially wanting to work for Olivia to a decisive, '*I'll serve this duke*'. However, there was much confusion over her language. She was cited as speaking prose/blank verse/iambic pentameter but without any textual reference, or understanding, of the effects of the different speech patterns.

Less successful answers demonstrated some understanding of Viola's resourcefulness and optimistic character but there was a tendency to lose focus on her '*introduction*' after commenting on her plan to disguise herself, and to discuss mistaken identity in the rest of the play. There was much confusion over Sebastian's attempt to save himself by binding himself to the mast. Some thought it was Sebastian who had been seen riding away on the dolphin, and not the mythological character Arion, and that the captain had made it up to keep Viola calm.

The weakest answers wrote a character analysis starting from this point but lapsing into a simple retelling of the passage and later events. Some thought Viola was being blackmailed by the captain and paid him for his silence about her disguise. There was misunderstanding of Elysium with some thinking Sebastian had landed in another country.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question. All candidates were able to identify the importance of mistaken identity in the play, focusing on how Olivia falls in love with Cesario/Viola and Cesario/Viola falls in love with Orsino. The most successful answers discussed the intricacies of the plot and how mistaken identity played a key role in developing and resolving it. The best answers explored the deeper implications of love as a form of madness and cited a number of cases of mistaken identity including: Feste's disguise as Sir Topaz and his disguise of his intelligence; the deception of Malvolio and the dramatic irony in the fact that the audience knows that Cesario is a woman. There was some understanding of comedy as tragedy averted, with the dangers of disguise, madness and cruelty (Malvolio's treatment) just about remedied by the final marriages. There was awareness of the audience's involvement, and enjoyment of the play, through Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony.

Less successful answers struggled to focus and covered a broad range of examples of mistaken identity without consideration of the dramatic impact created. There was little textual detail to support ideas leading to some very narrative responses. The weakest answers wrote generally about *Twelfth Night* in the Christmas period and the concept of the Lord of Misrule then simply narrated what happened in some incidents of mistaken identity. Some focused solely on the gulling of Malvolio and tended to retell the events without linking it to the terms of the question.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was also a very popular text and there were many insightful and thorough responses. The question required candidates to comment on the power of the scene as a dramatic opening to Act 2, so reference to later events was within the terms of the question. The dramatic presentation of the storm and its intensity was well understood, as was its symbolic echo of the emotional tempest to come. However, some candidates, in focussing on this foreshadowing aspect of the storm, provided too much detail on later events, losing focus on the passage.

The most successful answers identified the context, explored the passage in detail, and were able to relate textual details of the extract to broader themes of the play. They noted how the portrayal of Othello's courage and bravery lent greater impact to his downfall, with the violence of the storm foreshadowing the violence of Othello's temper and fury later in the play. Stronger answers contrasted Iago and Brabantio's descriptions of Othello earlier in the play with his depiction here as '*warlike*', '*brave*' and '*worthy*'. They understood the dramatic impact on the men, and of the audience, awaiting Othello's arrival and fearing for his safety during the storm. Better answers explored the irony surrounding Cassio's regard for Othello in light of future events and the

knowledge that Iago intends to use him to bring down Othello. They commented on structural aspects, for example the contrast between Venice and Cyprus, the implications of the change of setting, and also in how the destruction of the Turkish fleet gives space for another kind of war to emerge. 'Well-selected textual reference' and 'close analysis of the language' were features of these answers and there were perceptive comments on the descriptive imagery of the storm and the animalistic imagery of the '*monstrous mane*'.

Less successful answers were narrative in approach, working through the events and exchanges rather than exploring the tension on stage. They struggled with the context, who these characters were and who was safe or lost at sea. Whilst they understood the raging storm and destruction of the Turkish fleet, there was some misunderstanding of the language where candidates attempted to analyse individual words, rather than in the context of the passage. Weaker answers found the language difficult and worked through the text explaining words literally, for example the '*ribs of oak*' were human ribs, likely to be destroyed in the storm, and '*His bark*' referred to Othello 'as a dog'. Consequently, there was often little to reward in these responses.

- (b) This was a popular question and candidates responded enthusiastically to Iago making clear they found him a fascinating character. Many candidates argued that he, and not Othello, was the main protagonist as he drives the plot and controls character behaviour throughout. There was audience engagement and some candidates conveyed respect for his intelligence and disdain for his victims. The most successful answers explored how he uses the insecurities of his victims and how he manages to destroy Othello's whole personality through his mastery of language, and psychological manipulation. They were able to write sensitively about his pathological jealousy and the way in which his soliloquies, asides and the dramatic irony, draw the audience into an unwanted sense of knowledge and complicity.

Many wrote about his carefully prepared plans: managing Cassio's downfall; his manipulation of Roderigo and Brabantio and his manipulation of Othello through his language and use of the handkerchief. There was insight into Iago's language and the metaphor of the spider's web and pestilence poured into Othello's ear. The most successful answers explored how the style of Othello's language seemed to echo Iago's as the play progresses reducing him to brutish and monosyllabic: '*O, blood, blood, blood!*'. Iago's motives were discussed but better answers argued that these were unbelievable as motivation for Iago's campaign to destroy Othello. The strongest candidates concluded his lack of clear motivation remains a mystery and adds to Iago's fascination. They cited his refusal to speak at the end as evidence that Iago himself had no justification for his campaign to destroy Othello.

A few less successful answers used prepared character studies of Iago which would have benefitted from closer links to the question and the ways in which Shakespeare makes him such a fascinating character. Nevertheless, they were able to describe some of the incidents orchestrated by Iago, as well as possible reasons for his behaviour. Some used just two quotations, '*Honest Iago*' and '*I am not what I am*' and referenced Coleridge's 'motiveless malignity' but without exploring them further. Candidates who lost focus on Iago and wrote about Machiavellian schemes were often self-penalising. In the weakest answers, Iago was simply a baddie, evil to the core and the devil himself, though they were unable to support this with close reference to the text.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0475/23  
Drama 23

## Key messages

- Successful responses showed a personal engagement with the text as drama and an awareness of stagecraft.
- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question and avoided introductions which consisted of plot summaries or lengthy discussions of historical background. Effective conclusions were more than a repetition of earlier points.
- A range of textual support and full analysis of references was a feature of the most successful responses. Direct, contextualised quotations are the best form of textual support.
- Contextualisation of the passage is important in passage-based responses, and selection of material from throughout the passage, including the ending, is essential. Close analysis of the language was a feature of successful responses.
- In successful discursive responses the question remained in focus and precise textual references from throughout the text were selected to support ideas.
- If literary terms and punctuation are identified but their intended effect is not considered, the response will not progress.

## General comments

Candidates demonstrated engagement with, and enjoyment of their set texts. Knowledge of the texts and an awareness of the drama on stage was often evident. The most effective responses showed critical understanding of the texts and made a perceptive and sensitive response to characterisation, stagecraft and language.

The most popular texts were *Journey's End* and *Othello*. *Twelfth Night* also proved a popular choice, and there was an increase in the number of candidates choosing to respond to *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. There was one new text this year, *Death and the King's Horseman*, with fewer responses seen. Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

It is necessary for candidates to remain closely focused on the key terms of the question, such as 'powerfully', 'dramatic', 'significant' or 'fascinating', in order to produce a successful response. It was pleasing to see candidates paying attention to the key ideas in the question and referencing them in their responses. A brief plan is a good idea to help candidates choose relevant material for inclusion, and to help them to remain focused on the question. It is always worthwhile for candidates to spend time annotating a passage before attempting the question.

Candidates should be reminded that if historical context is included in a response, it should be brief and relevant to the question. Lengthy introductory paragraphs on Sheriff's experience of war, or on women being viewed as possessions in Venice, were unlikely to gain reward. If such topics are outlined briefly and linked to the text, such as reference to Brabantio's comment about Desdemona, '*She is stol'n from me*', the response will engage more clearly with the text.

Setting the passage in context at the start of the response is important in a passage-based question. This is very helpful in demonstrating understanding of the structure of the text. An effective introduction should not be a lengthy discussion of historical context, a summary of the plot or a list of the writer's techniques; rather it should briefly set the passage in context. The response should consider the key terms of the question, the events of the scene and an exploration of the writer's methods in conveying his or her intentions to the audience. Brief well-selected references should be analysed fully. Less successful responses tended to paraphrase quotations from the passage, stating that they were dramatic but without explaining why. The

strongest answers to discursive questions chose a range of material from the text as a whole and used well-chosen, brief references to support points. As the Level Descriptors indicate, a reasonably developed response can be improved by 'integrating much well-selected reference to the text'. Some less successful responses appeared to address the question through a general discussion of the themes of the play. This approach was often not relevant to the question and meant that selection of material was not effective.

A clear awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage was a feature of successful responses which sustained engagement with the visual and aural nature of the drama and the impact on the audience. Referring to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'text' or 'book' demonstrated this awareness. Stronger responses commented on the dramatic impact and how the audience were made to feel, focussing on stage directions, foreshadowing and dramatic irony to demonstrate their understanding. Some weaker responses tended to summarise the plot, listing knowledge about the play but with no link to the question. These responses often limited their comments on the effects of staging to, 'making the audience want to know what happens next'.

Exploration of literary techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing was often successful. However, many responses tended to point out such techniques with no exploration of their effects. Similarly, punctuation was often referred to, with no consideration of the effects in context. Any techniques referred to should be supported and their effects fully analysed, which helps build a well-developed response.

There were very few brief or unfinished responses and a few rubric infringements on Paper 23. The majority of rubric infringements were when candidates had answered two passage-based questions instead of one passage-based and one discursive question. In these instances, both responses are marked, but only the higher mark is awarded.

It was noted that there was a deterioration in handwriting, and although this syllabus does not assess spelling, punctuation and grammar, candidates should be aware of the importance of writing legibly and accurately to convey their ideas clearly.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) In general, there was clear personal engagement with Ernestine's development, her independence and courage in speaking up against Godfrey in a way which she would not previously have done. Many candidates expressed a heartfelt connection with Ernestine.

Stronger responses acknowledged that Ernestine exits into the real world rather than the movie world, but as one candidate put it, she has become 'the main lead in her own film'. This level of response also discussed Ernestine's turning away from Godfrey, literally and metaphorically – away from his religious beliefs and plans for her, and rejecting Father Divine's choice of name, 'Darling Angel'.

Many candidates expressed a feeling of admiration for Ernestine achieving her diploma and how she deals with her struggles against poverty, racism, and the low expectations of her father. Similarly, there was focus on the family's pride in Ernestine's achievement and how this pride is clearly connected with a feeling of happiness, therefore showing relevance for the question. Many responses commented on and understood Ermina's feelings for Ernestine, and how she will miss her. This was often conveyed through Ermina's comment, '*Better not!*' in reference to Godfrey possibly damaging the diploma if he takes it to work to, '*show it off to the boys.*'

Comments about the staging of the passage were often effective. There was discussion of the lighting presenting Ernestine as the main focus of the scene and the visual effect of the decorations and cake signifying the efforts that the family have made, despite their poverty, and their feelings of pride and love for her. The fading light and Ernestine smiling at the end of the scene, was referenced as impactful and significant in showing her having overcome barriers to become her own woman.

There was some confusion regarding the sewing of the graduation gown, with some candidates thinking that Ernestine's mother sewed it before she died, and others not understanding the

importance of Lily's parting gesture of sewing back the lace collar, showing her love for and approval of Ernestine.

In weaker responses, overall coverage of the passage was limited. In particular, discussion of Ermina was absent, and Gerte's contribution to the scene, her reassurance of Godfrey, was often missed. There was often little or no reference to the effects of the lighting and staging and there were many inaccurate references to the 'Crumbs' family rather than Crump.

- (b) Very few responses were seen. Of these, the stronger answers were able to identify the various racial tensions – the obvious racism towards people of colour, but also the tension caused by Gerte and Lily and her politics. Weaker responses did not progress beyond this; they did not develop on the issues created by Gerte, or the Levy's. Most responses did not show an understanding of the racial tensions between the German people post-war and Jews. Some responses focused on Lily's response to the racism she has experienced and her relationship with Gerte to explore the theme of racial tensions, but these responses often did not broaden the discussion to the context and wider society.

### R.C. SHERIFF: *Journey's End*

#### Question 2

- (a) This was a very popular question and provoked many impassioned personal responses to the futility of war, which were enjoyable to read. Candidates generally engaged well with this passage, showing understanding of the men's awareness of the suicidal nature of the raid, Osborne's care for Raleigh and his wish to shield him from the truth about the raid. They understood that Osborne is resigned to his fate and worries more about Raleigh than about himself. There was some comment on the High Command's apparent lack of concern at the loss of life which results from their plans, questioning the efficacy of a leadership which would send characters to their inevitable deaths. Many candidates referenced the brotherhood of the soldiers and their reaction to the young and naïve Raleigh being selected to join the raid, which added further pathos to the scene.

The dramatic tension of the passage was explored convincingly by many candidates with comment on the characters' fast-paced dialogue, short sentences, pauses and use of punctuation in creating dramatic impact. It was pleasing to note that candidates considered the silences (indicated by stage directions) in conveying Osborne's reaction to his fate, creating tension and encouraging the audience to consider the effect of war on soldiers who live with the normality of terror. Likewise, there were observations on Trotter's euphemistic use of language linked to how the violence of war has become 'normalised' to the characters.

Trotter's tone shift from, '*It was murder.*' to, '*Doesn't this tea taste of onions?*', was widely commented on with varying degrees of success. Some candidates effectively discussed Trotter's coping mechanisms of food and humour and there were some unusual comments about the significance of the onions, representing the tears of loss or the stink of death. Weaker responses became sidetracked at this point by general discussion of the unpleasant living conditions in the trenches, therefore drifting from the passage. Stronger responses understood the fact that the book which Osborne turns to at the end of the passage is '*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*', and that this is his way of escaping the horror of the impending raid.

In weaker responses there was some misunderstanding of Trotter's status and of his character, with some candidates thinking that his words show arrogance or that he is glad that Raleigh has been chosen to go on the raid; or that he is 'carefree'. Many candidates did not understand the significance of Trotter's description of the previous raid and what it says about the nature of the High Command and its importance for Osborne's upcoming raid. This level of response also tended to lack coverage of Mason's part in the passage.

A language point which was often covered, even in weaker responses was discussion of the repetition of the word '*murder*' and how it shows the soldiers' understanding of the likely outcome of the raid. On this topic, the foreshadowing of Osborne's death in the raid was often discussed.

- (b) In general, candidates engaged well with this text and were able to show sympathy and compassion towards the soldiers' plight. Responses to this question generally engaged effectively with the character of Stanhope.

There was often a good balance of ideas about what it means to be a hero, with his flawed nature being explored as well as his qualities, and the idea that being a hero is a burden to him.

Many candidates showed both empathy and sympathy towards Stanhope when addressing the question and commented on the suffering he has endured at such a young age in his position as a Captain. Candidates referenced Stanhope's dependence on alcohol and were able to identify his drinking as a coping mechanism. There was considerable comment on Raleigh and his hero-worship, with some discussion of Stanhope's unfounded suspicion of him and linking this to his state of mind. Raleigh's role in allowing us a window to Stanhope's pre-war self was a useful way to allow the audience's sympathy for Stanhope to be deepened. Similarly, Stanhope's own view of himself as lacking heroic qualities added to the complexity of the discussion.

Stronger responses were able to consider the nature of heroism and explored Stanhope's courageous acts in volunteering for raids and being awarded the MC for his bravery in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. When considering Stanhope's relationship with the men under his command such as Hibbert, Osborne and Raleigh, candidates took the opportunity to explore his caring nature despite the mental turmoil he himself is under. Insightful comments considered how he is viewed by other characters to consider the extent to which he is a hero, such as Hardy's criticism of his drinking, Raleigh's hero-worship and Osborne's fatherly care. Stanhope's military competence and hard work were often presented as admirable aspects of his character, adding to his heroism.

Stanhope's care for his men, his encouragement of Hibbert (contrasted with his dramatic threat to shoot him) and his tender treatment of Raleigh as he dies, were all given of examples of his heroic nature. There was some discussion of how there is no such thing as a hero during war, just a human being doing their best, but being flawed.

Less effective answers provided a basic 'yes' or 'no' response with limited discussion and exploration of the term, 'hero'. Responses which gave a simple character sketch did not fully address the terms of the question.

## **WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman***

### **Question 3**

- (a) Few responses were seen to this question. Some candidates engaged well with the idea of Jane's hypocrisy towards Olunde and her ignorance of Yoruba culture, even though she is slightly more considerate than her husband. The most convincing responses focused on the term 'strikingly' in conveying the conflicting attitudes to ritual suicide.

Successful responses were able to identify how Olunde allows the audience to understand the Yoruba world more easily. There was valid comment on his vocabulary and complex sentence structures in establishing him as an intelligent individual who expresses his views on the hypocrisy of the British very clearly. Successful responses considered his accusatory tone and language when describing the sheer magnitude of the damage the British have inflicted on their own people. The suicide of one person to maintain the balance of the universe in Olunde's view, is mild compared to the mass murder of thousands of young men for the sake of the Crown. It is his comments on the flaws of the British which in part, contribute to addressing the term, 'strikingly' in the question.

Insightful responses recognised Jane's confusion when understanding Olunde's attitude to ritual suicide. Likewise, discerning responses commented on Olunde's confusion over Jane's idea that he could either inhabit the Yoruba world or the Western world. Jane's failure to realise that Olunde feels perfectly comfortable in inhabiting both and has no intention of rejecting either, contributes to her incredulity. Effective responses mentioned that Olunde shows understanding of Jane's culture, but owing to her arrogance and closed mind, she has no understanding of his.

Stage directions were often discussed by candidates to show understanding of and insight into a character and their emotions. In the passage, Jane's ironic shock and disgust shown by her scream, contrasts to Olunde's calm and unemotional justification of Elesin's suicide. The impact of the staging effects of the drums and how they enhance the tension surrounding the uncertainty of what is happening in the village were commented on by successful responses. However, many responses missed the irony of Olunde's assumption that his father has carried out his duty and committed suicide.

Weaker responses tended to narrate with no analysis of language or real engagement with the characters.

- (b) This question was successfully addressed by many candidates, with responses identifying the market women and girls as the carriers of values and traditions for the Yoruba people with responsibility for maintaining harmony. Candidates addressed the importance of Iyaloja and the marketplace, the choric role of the women and their steady presence throughout the play which increases the audience's understanding of their culture. Strong responses interpreted the term 'dramatic impact' in relation to the women and developed these points with appropriate textual support.

The women's initial reaction to Elesin was commented on effectively with candidates referencing his god-like status within the Yoruba community and his attachment to the market women. The high esteem the women hold him in, their desire to please him and their awe of him, all making his fall from grace even more ironic and dramatic. They also mentioned the bringing of fine clothes and their role in helping Elesin on his journey.

The failure of Elesin to carry out his responsibilities was explored successfully by candidates when the burden falls on the women of the market to restore the cosmic balance. There was some worthwhile comment on the powerful role of Iyaloja and her warnings to Elesin linked to foreshadowing. Similarly, valid comment was in evidence on Iyaloja upholding the values of the tribe and the scorn she heaps upon Elesin when he fails to carry out his duty. Successful responses identified the women's role when they carry Olunde's body to Elesin's holding cell to show him the consequences of his failing, their bitterness adding to the dramatic nature of the play.

There was some legitimate comment on the bride selected for Elesin and the significance of her role. Iyaloja's initial feelings of reluctance in allowing her future daughter in law to marry Elesin are overcome by her belief that Elesin cannot be denied his last wishes. Some candidates commented that following Elesin's death, the bride will be forced to live with Elesin's behaviour by caring for his child on her own and that she has no say in her marriage to him for fear of disrupting the cosmic balance. This once again, reinforces the significance of women in the play and the dramatic impact of Elesin's shortcomings on the Yoruba community.

There were some detailed observations on the women's derisive treatment of Amusa when they mock his masculinity. Held in low regard by the women, they view him as someone who does the colonisers' bidding; he is no match for the wit of the market women. There was relevant comment on the women's satirising of the British and in so doing, showing their power and ability in resisting suppression.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

### **Question 4**

- (a) The most successful responses engaged with the comedy of this scene, of Malvolio's contempt for the other characters and how he gives the appearance of madness by having made himself ridiculous in response to the letter. These responses often commented on Malvolio's arrogance and desire for status contrasted with his previous Puritan demeanour.

Candidates who identified the context of the scene were more successful than those who did not. Reference to the letter and its obvious effect on Malvolio in the way he speaks to the other characters was important, and successful responses were able to give a thoughtful comment about whether or not the prank had gone too far. These candidates were able to comment on Malvolio's ideas of superiority when thinking that Olivia has fallen in love with him and his subsequent treatment of characters in the scene, making the audience feel an even stronger dislike towards him, anticipating his punishment.

In terms of the scene being '*fascinating*', there was some useful comment on the supposed madness of Malvolio mirroring the other forms of madness within the play. There was some understanding of Maria's wish to push the prank further to seek revenge on Malvolio, making some response to the cruelty of her 'bullying'. The way that Sir Toby ridicules Malvolio was often left unexplored. There was often some reference to the imagery of hell and of Malvolio being later '*in a dark room and bound*', with the cruelty that this conjures up, but there were some gaps in

understanding and little development of effects. Understanding of the irony of Fabian's words, '*If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction*', was evident in more successful responses. These responses also engaged with the dramatic irony within the passage.

Weaker responses paid little attention to the context of the passage and made little or no reference to the prank played upon Malvolio by the other characters or to Malvolio's ridiculous behaviour as a result of the letter. This level of response often assumed that the characters really think that Malvolio is mad, with no understanding that they are mocking him in order to convince him that he is demoniacally possessed. Understanding in these responses remained at a superficial level. Similarly, when responses simply narrated what they thought was happening and did not engage with the plot, this was unlikely to lead to high reward. Some candidates struggled to engage with this passage and understanding of the language was not secure in these responses.

- (b) Candidates were able to identify examples of love which is not returned, with much reference to the love triangle, but responses were often general and descriptive with little or no specific textual support or detailed analysis of language.

Orsino's love for Olivia was frequently cited and the most successful responses made some valid comment on his self-indulgent mood and the idea that he sees Olivia as an idealised object to satisfy his desire for love. The idea of Orsino enjoying unrequited love in the sense that he revels in melancholy and in dramatically expressing his grief when Olivia repeatedly rejects him, was explored. This level of response also identified the imagery of hunting and how Orsino's view of unrequited love is viewed as a predatory experience. Many candidates recognised the fickleness of his love for Olivia when he abruptly switches his affections to Viola. Likewise, there was some questioning of how genuine Olivia's grief was when her mourning period abruptly ends in order to pursue Cesario.

Stronger responses were able to explore the examples of unrequited love in detail and link them to comedy and madness. The role of disguise in unrequited love was explored, for example Viola's attempt to subtly convey her love for Orsino but his refusal or inability to understand, due the fact that she is disguised as a man. Her inner conflict and grief as a result of this was understood and discussed in stronger responses, and a sense of personal sympathy was expressed. Insightful responses referenced parasitic imagery when considering Viola's unrequited love for Orsino, indicating how painful the experience is for her and in so doing, contrasting it to Orsino's shallow and self-absorbed 'love' for Olivia.

There was much focus on Malvolio's 'love' for Olivia, with many candidates recognising that it is based on his ambition to improve his status and wealth, but these responses often lacked detail and development. Similarly, when Antonio's unrequited love for Sebastian was referred to, the subtleties were often misunderstood, and development was lacking. Overall, weaker responses relied heavily upon narrative to describe the action of their chosen moments.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was a very popular question. Important to this question was the interruption by Brabantio of a crucial state meeting concerning the Turkish threat, demonstrating his selfish and melodramatic nature. There was often clear focus on the contrast of Brabantio's anger with Othello's dignity in this scene and those responses which supported this with close textual evidence gained higher reward. Issues of racism were clearly understood, as was the objectification of women and Desdemona in particular.

Some candidates viewed Brabantio at a surface level, in that they empathised with his expression of '*grief*' for the '*loss*' of his daughter and felt sorry for him. What characterised a successful answer was when responses engaged more critically and recognised the overreaction and drama on the part of Brabantio, which contrasted with the calm Othello. Successful responses were able to identify Brabantio's quick succession of verbs with their negative connotations of suffering and violence in creating urgency, which added to the dramatic impact and anticipation of what was to be revealed in the scene.

Successful responses explored Othello's monologue and how his eloquence contrasts with his claim, '*rude am I*'. There was discussion of Othello's comment, '*I won his daughter*', suggesting an element of competition and an undercurrent of challenge, and also the suggestion that Desdemona is seen as a possession or prize to be won. At this point some responses drifted into a general discussion of society or of women being seen as possessions in Shakespeare's time, losing focus on the passage as a result.

Less successful responses paid little or no attention to Othello's monologue (often incorrectly labelled as a soliloquy), or on Brabantio's emotional language of '*floodgate*', '*spells*' and '*witchcraft*'. Similarly, the Duke's words, his description of Othello as '*valiant*', his use of the repeated plosives of 'b', expressing his importance and force in deciding Othello's fate; and his promise to punish the unknown culprit, were often missed, meaning that coverage of the passage was limited. Many candidates completely ignored the powerful role of the Duke in the scene, but stronger responses understood the irony that, while sympathising with Brabantio at first, the Duke is not aware that the person being accused is Othello.

There was some effective discussion of setting – the important war council and the clash of Brabantio bringing his private concerns into this setting, although some responses mistakenly thought that Brabantio has taken Othello to court to accuse him of Desdemona's abduction. There was some misunderstanding that Brabantio has not been invited to the meeting – he has. Similarly, some responses thought that Othello is a stranger to Brabantio and were not aware that Brabantio knows Othello and has hosted him at his house, previously showing respect and admiration for him. Brabantio's racism towards Othello was sometimes missed, or very general remarks were made about racism.

- (b) This question allowed candidates to explore the characteristics of Cassio, with stronger responses able to consider both the positive and negative aspects of his character. There were some effective personal responses which provided a sense of balance, showing sympathy for Cassio due to his lack of knowledge about how he is a gullible victim of Iago's manipulation. They commented on how he is also a victim of Othello's rage, losing the trust of a well-respected friend. It was often stated that he has done nothing wrong, and many candidates expressed indignance at his treatment. The balance was provided in the most successful responses with an awareness of Cassio's weaknesses such as his lack of will power to resist alcohol in the face of Iago's persuasion and his resulting involvement in a violent and chaotic fight. His attitude towards women, in particular his dismissive manner towards Bianca was also discussed.

More straightforward responses detailed how we are encouraged to see Cassio as a true gentleman unwittingly trapped in Iago's web of lies. Unfortunately, some candidates lapsed into narrative here, making a list of Iago's wrongdoings towards Cassio which leads to his dismissal by Othello and how we are persuaded to feel sorry for him because of this. These responses provided little or no analysis, and indeed, some responses completely lost focus on Cassio, often resulting in an essay about Iago.

Cassio's repetition of '*Reputation!*' provided the basis of many responses which explored his priorities with varying degrees of success. Stronger responses expanded this into an analysis of the imagery in '*...what remains is bestial*.' It was pleasing to note how some candidates were able to contrast Iago's misogyny towards Desdemona in using debased language in comparison to Cassio's chivalrous and respectful language, which shows his admiration for her.

Stronger responses commented on the fact that Cassio's status is restored at the end of the play, when he becomes Governor of Cyprus; he is reconciled with Othello, and that this may give comfort to the audience. A few responses were based on the mistaken idea that Cassio dies at the end of the play and some stated that Cassio suffers from racism as he is from Florence, but these points were overstated.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 0475/31 (Open Text)**  
**Drama 31**

## **Key messages**

- Successful responses avoided lengthy introductory plot summaries and discussions of historical context and swiftly moved on to the task. They also avoided listing techniques to be addressed.
- A brief plan of key points is useful in keeping answers focused and a reminder of important material to include.
- Lengthy conclusions which simply repeat material from the essay are rarely useful. An additional new point and a concluding reference to the question is more likely to gain credit.
- Short, direct quotations from the text were the best method of supporting points. Some should be probed more closely and candidates should consider why particular language features were chosen.
- In passage-based questions successful responses contextualised the passage and then explored it fully, considering the effects of language and structure. References should be selected from the whole passage, including the ending.
- Successful discursive responses maintained a tight focus on the question, avoided re-telling the plot, and used precise textual references.
- Summaries of plot are unlikely to achieve high reward. Successful responses recognised characters as constructs and how authorial choices create dramatic effects.
- Less successful responses identified literary terms and punctuation without considering their intended effect on the audience or how they enhance the author's ideas.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage, and the audience's emotions, are essential in successful responses.

## **General comments**

Overall, there was a sense of engagement with the set texts and some excellent work was seen with learned material which had been assimilated and allowed many to offer independent interpretation.

Successful responses showed clear knowledge of the set texts and were able to demonstrate critical understanding, showing insight into characterisation, stagecraft, structure, language and the author's ideas. They focused on key words in the question such as 'striking' or 'fascinating' and interpreted such terms as 'entertaining' in their broadest sense, to include comedy, tension or drama. Stronger candidates showed sustained awareness that the texts are written to be performed onstage and considered their impact. By referring to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'book' candidates demonstrated this awareness.

Briefly setting the passage in context at the start of the response is essential in helping to show understanding of the structure of the text and how characters or themes develop. However, many candidates wrote over-lengthy generic introductions including such information as race relations in the 1950s, military strategy in WW1 or lists of the writer's techniques. It is very useful to teach the historical context of the play but focus during the exam should be on key words in the question, what is happening in the passage and an exploration of the writer's ways of achieving effects.

Exploration of the use of techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing was often successful. However, naming literary techniques with no exploration of their effects is unlikely to be rewarded. Similarly, referencing punctuation with no consideration of the effects in context is unhelpful in producing a successful response. Candidates should consider both stage directions and dialogue to maximise opportunities for demonstrating understanding of the author's craft.

Several responses had a tendency to interject with personal stories related to the text but not relevant to the question, 'I have a similar relative to Aunt Lily.' Personal engagement with the text is important, but this type of lengthy anecdote distracted from the question and wasted valuable exam time.

Time management was generally good, with few unfinished responses. There was a huge range in the length of answers, with some producing single paragraphs and making a limited attempt to respond and others writing at great length, covering extensive material with impressive textual support, both in passage-based questions and discursive essays, demonstrating how much can be achieved when candidates are well-prepared.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This question focused on the impact Lily has on the Crump sisters and enabled candidates to consider the values she represents and to discuss the contrast with Godfrey's parenting and influence over the girls.

Most responses recognised the humorous presentation of Lily's drunkenness and the entertainment value of her physical actions, dancing with both the dummy and Ernestine, along with the volume of her dialogue indicated by the capitalisation. Stronger answers evidenced the contrast in the appearance of Lily as 'drunk and dishevelled' versus the 'pristine white' dresses of the sisters, their voices and actions, using the stage directions to illustrate how Lily commands the scene with forceful movements and dialogue. There were also opportunities to discuss tone – her teasing of Ernestine and how the mambo music is used to convey how Lily is lost in her lengthy and detailed recollection of her passionate night with Papo.

The scene affords a glimpse of Lily's joie de vivre, her free-thinking and independent character in contrast with the girls' caution and obedience. Despite his absence, Godfrey's restrictive presence is felt in their dialogue.

Stronger answers identified the tension created by this contrast in values and how the girls' expectation that Godfrey would appear and disapprove is entertaining and gripping for the audience. Sustained answers considered the contrast between the sisters and evidenced Ermina's competitive spirit versus Ernestine's restraint. They saw Lily as injecting a burst of activity into the drama, something welcomed by Ermina as well as the audience and reflecting Nottage's use of the character to represent values and options available to her young protagonists. Some candidates strayed from the extract into a discourse on the position of black women in the context of 1950s America

- (b) This question pointed candidates towards the character of Godfrey and his relationship with Father Divine but material regarding the whole family's response to this relationship was useful in defining how Nottage creates memorable drama and impact. Most candidates had the knowledge of Godfrey's loss of Sandra and his motivation for moving to New York and committing to his beliefs and could explain this but without referencing how this is revealed to the audience. Some candidates struggled to demonstrate how the relationship was presented on stage and a few reverted to solely using the passage from 1a) to illustrate how the girls respond to their father's beliefs and principles. Many responses showed personal sympathy for Godfrey's need for support and some for the girls based on material from 1a). Again, there was limited evidence of how Nottage elicits pathos and specific moments where this is achieved. Some answers diverted into lengthy explanations of race relations and attitudes to communism in 1950s America.

There were few answers which evidenced how Nottage presented this relationship in any detail. Evidence that was used included the notebook which appears as a visual reminder of Godfrey's reliance and the changing of the girls' names, and the restrictions imposed upon them on Sundays. Some commented on Godfrey copying Father Divine and marrying a white woman as evidence that he is unable to think for himself.

Few answers could identify how dramatic scenes are constructed around Godfrey's relationship with the Peace Mission and the conflict between Lily and Godfrey. Fewer commented on the revelation that the organisation is fraudulent and how this is finally revealed to the audience.

## **R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End***

### **Question 2**

- (a) This question focused on a dramatic moment approaching the end of the play, enabling candidates to contextualise the scene and consider events preceding the fatal mission and also the following events. The passage elicited the full range of responses and most candidates demonstrated clear personal engagement and empathy with the moving events, Sherriff's presentation of the characters' grief and the brutality of war.

Most responses identified the contrasting responses of the characters to the loss of life and answers were differentiated by the range of details considered and how stage direction and dialogue revealed deeper implications and emotions that are not voiced. Most recognised the powerful revelation of Osborne's death and the character's importance within the wider play. The stronger answers considered how the audience are given the news and the tension created by the delayed revelation and Stanhope's slow entrance.

Stage directions were particularly rich in this extract. Many answers recognised the Colonel's delight and evidenced his ill-judged language and enthusiasm in contrast with Stanhope's 'astonishment' but restrained responses, maintaining his professionalism and continuing his duty but with bleak sarcasm. Many showed knowledge of the previous scene and Stanhope's reservations about the mission. Most identified the awkwardness conveyed by the dashes and hesitancy in the Colonel's speech and stage directions and the powerful tension created in this exchange. Stronger answers related this moment to Sherriff's critique of warfare: the detachment and indifference of those commanding operations from the reality of the front line; the lack of compassion for replaceable soldiers who become numbers rather than individuals.

Stronger answers considered the end of the extract and the exchanges between the Colonel/Stanhope and Raleigh. Many answers recognised the change in Raleigh's character and the loss of his former enthusiasm and naivety and engaged with the woeful inadequacy of medals for innocence or lives lost. Stage directions of bloodied hands, lowered head and inability to stand and speak offered much evidence to support ideas of trauma or deeper implications regarding guilt.

Symbolism of Osborne's bed and his personal effects provided a springboard to consider earlier or later scenes, the pathos of the family left at home, Osborne's stoicism, the dispensability of soldiers or Raleigh's later fate. There were similarly varied and equally acceptable responses to the final exchange between Stanhope and Raleigh and suggestions of the tone of Stanhope's request and the powerful end to the scene 'Must you sit on Osborne's bed?' The stage direction of 'their eyes meet' offered an opportunity to comment on the powerful change in the relationship.

A few candidates recognised the dramatic quality of the sound effects and lighting in the closing stages – silence, the very lights fading, the last shell, the booming guns and offered interpretation of how these are significant and create impact on the audience – recognising the extract as part of a performance.

Less successful responses repeated the mantra that Sherriff is representing his own experience and is revealing the futility of war, both of which are true but more precise points of his critique were more highly rewarded.

- (b) Too few responses to this question were seen to make meaningful comment.

**WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman***

**Question 3**

- (a) This question focused on a moment where characters not only possess different values but also knowledge of what has happened in the preceding moments which is a source of 'uncomfortable' feelings for both Pilkings and the audience. Most candidates contextualised the passage and provided a little appropriate cultural context, explaining the tradition and what Elesin's duty as the King's Horseman entails. Candidates needed to move swiftly onto the extract once this knowledge had been demonstrated.

Most responses identified Pilkings' hesitancy and broken speech as evidence of his awkwardness although some did not contextualise this and explain the source of his discomfort. Some addressed the stage directions signifying his shock at seeing Olunde and his comments on his appearing as a ghost. Stronger answers addressed the dramatic irony and the knowledge that Pilkings has already ordered Elesin's arrest and audiences may infer, if not clearly known at this point, that the 'terrible calamity' has already occurred. Stronger answers identified both the urgency in Pilkings' dialogue and Olunde's desire to see his father 'before he turns cold' which creates dramatic tension before the revelation of Elesin's arrest.

Stronger candidates engaged with the whole of the extract rather than solely Pilkings' awkwardness. The opening exchanges demonstrate Olunde trying to clarify his commitment to the welfare of his people and Jane's awkward reminder that he was disowned. The opening allowed these candidates to consider the broader ideas of colonialism that Soyinka is critiquing and the awkwardness of inequalities of power for the audience. Some candidates identified the irony of several of Olunde's lines regarding 'duty', references to his death and Pilkings' inability to 'understand – or help' and considered how these comments foreshadowed events to follow.

- (b) Too few responses to this question were seen to make meaningful comment.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

**Question 4**

- (a) This extract is rich in detail and offered many opportunities to discuss staging, the audience experience and the comical characters. Most responses recognised the context of the scene and the gulling of Malvolio and could recognise his comical behaviour and social climbing. They recognised the visual comedy of characters hiding in the box tree and the audience recognising that Malvolio is unaware he is being watched and overheard. Several candidates misread 'she did affect me' as referencing Maria and others that the letter had already been read.

Stronger candidates could offer a detailed analysis of how Malvolio's lines present his fantasy and ambition as well as his vain character. Many quoted the 'Count Malvolio' to support this point but more thorough textual reference and close consideration of language revealing his pride and affectation marked out the best responses. These responses also ranged across the other characters, rather than solely Malvolio. Maria's instruction to 'observe' builds anticipation for not only the characters but also the audience for the comedy to follow. Her reference to the 'trout' and Fabian's 'turkey-cock' were popularly cited as evidence of their comical belittling view of Malvolio. Most candidates identified the exclamations and short interjections, but many struggled to engage with the language and meaning of the insults or the cause of Sir Toby's violent response to being reduced to 'Toby'.

Shakespeare's critique of social climbing, class restrictions and Puritanism featured in several stronger answers, and many contextualised the final lines referencing 'drunkenness' in relation to the earlier scenes. Clear, critical responses were able to relate the scene to ideas from the wider comedy: themes of appearance and reality, the overturning of class restrictions on *Twelfth Night*, and love, including self-love.

- (b) This question asked candidates to consider a central relationship within the play which is the source of much of the comedy regarding mistaken identity. Weaker candidates tended to recount the plot of the play in relation to the characters and produce narrative responses with little or no textual detail. Most could comment on the dramatic irony of Viola's disguise and the audience's awareness of Olivia's mistake. Many could recognise Olivia's fascinating swift abandonment of her

vow to 'abjure the company of men'. Most answers needed greater textual detail and consideration of Shakespeare's language in presenting this relationship, which helps to keep the audience 'fascinated' and achieves different effects such as pathos or comedy.

Stronger answers could evidence Viola's motivation and method of wooing Olivia on Orsino's behalf and comment on her language. They evidenced her bemused response to Olivia's love as well as Olivia's active pursuit of Cesario and recognition that she has caught the 'plague'. Sebastian's appearance and marriage to Olivia was often used to support ideas of the shallowness and superficiality of love. Structurally, some candidates recognised that this relationship created many of the comic confusions to follow, including the tensions in the duel scene and culminating in the resolution scene. Critical responses effectively related the focus of the question to wider themes of the play such as mistaken identities, gender confusion and love's madness.

Many answers tried to link relevant context to their ideas, commenting on prohibitive same-sex or cross-class relationships and Shakespeare pushing boundaries. Candidates must remember not to pursue such material at too great a length and at the expense of thorough textual support and analysis of Shakespeare's language. Several lost sight of the comedy at the heart of the play and saw it solely as a serious treatise on Elizabethan society.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

### **Question 5**

- (a) The extract taken from the closing stages of the tragedy offered an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of the final positions of the characters in relation to their earlier contrasting presentations. Some spent too much time writing about what we know about the characters from the rest of the play, rather than focusing on the extract itself. Most recognised Othello's remorse and acknowledgement of his crime along with Iago's unusual brevity and refusal to speak. Answers were differentiated by the level of detail and the deeper implications of the language used by, and about, characters. Several candidates misread 'damned slave' as referencing Othello, leading to comments on racism, and 'I am not sorry' as Othello's lack of guilt for killing Desdemona.

Answers were generally successful in identifying that Iago is finally recognised as a villain, and Othello's former love for Desdemona has returned, and could comment structurally on how these character developments are powerful and satisfying to an audience. This was an extract rich in language. Weaker responses identified the exclamations as signifying grief and many candidates recognised 'he that was Othello' and Lodovico's assessment as striking in showing the hero's fall from grace. Most candidates recognised the hellish imagery as strikingly revealing Othello's recognition of his crime as well as Iago's demonic character. More subtle responses identified the imperative graphic verbs demanding his punishment. 'All in honour' offered many candidates an opportunity to show understanding of Othello's motivation. Candidates offering a critical view of the text suggested his defence of being an 'honourable murderer', and his apportioning blame to Iago for 'ensnaring' him, evidences incomplete realisation or remorse. They also acknowledged his confession and recognition that he has reached his 'journey's end', foreshadowing his later suicide. Few commented on the inclusion of his apology to Cassio.

Perhaps because of time restraints, Iago's role in the scene was often underdeveloped. Many commented that his 'villainy' is now out in the open and several commented effectively on the significance of 'viper' in relation to Iago's role in the wider play. The irony of his silence after wreaking havoc with language was striking to many candidates. Stronger answers recognised his taunting of Othello in both his lines. Some candidates offered a personal response that this retention of evil power and Iago's gloating is striking and disturbing to the audience, especially when juxtaposed with the disarmed Othello's weakness. The enigmatic 'what you know' prompted different interpretations, including being addressed to the audience who have been privy to his plan throughout.

- (b) There were some strong responses to the question and many candidates clearly engaged with the character and the issues raised regarding gender inequality. Some, however, explored context in too much detail, writing generally on women's roles and relationships with their husbands in Venetian society. There was also some insecurity about how much Emilia knew about Iago's plan.

Most candidates identified the tragic impact of Emilia passing the handkerchief to Iago and understood Emilia's motivation to please Iago's 'fantasy'. They also recognised her strong defence

of Desdemona in the denouement and how this enables the truth to be revealed to all. Stronger answers could range across the play more fully and evidence her seeming powerlessness in the initial scene in Cyprus and her minimal response to Iago's misogyny. They could evidence how she contributes to the central theme of jealousy, apparently motivating Iago's plan and also recognising it in Othello and warning Desdemona. Many candidates engaged well with Act 4's 'Willow' scene and explored the impact of Emilia's lines advocating gender equality and sexual freedom in contrast with Desdemona's innocence. Some claimed that this revealed she was unfaithful, taking comments out of context, or pursued this line of argument and Shakespeare's feminist leanings too lengthily, at the expense of other scenes with dramatic impact.

A few were able to comment on the dramatic impact of Emilia ironically recognising that 'some wretch' has planted the idea of Desdemona's infidelity in Othello's head, and creating tension when she wishes a 'halter' for that person and demands that 'hell gnaw his bones'. More were able to recognise the strength of her character in the final scene. Candidates often cited her actions as affecting the plot or related them to Shakespeare's social commentary but omitted to consider the impact she has on the audience. Her defiance of Othello's threats and her abuse of him is hugely dramatic and welcomed by the audience, as is her refusal to be silent and to 'charm' her tongue when demanded by Iago. The stronger responses recognised the character's growing strength through the course of the play and the significance of her greater loyalty to Desdemona and to justice than to her husband and expectations of obedience. The pathos of her final lines, singing the willow song and lying with Desdemona, featured in some answers which were more anchored to the audience experience and the genre of tragedy. The key words in the question, in this case 'dramatic impact', needed to be revisited regularly to fulfil the assessment criteria.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0475/32 (Open Text)  
Drama 32

## Key messages

- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, sustained the link, and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Opening paragraphs should be brief and avoid lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- In passage-based questions, successful answers briefly stated the context of the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful answers to the discursive questions maintained a sharp focus on the question and could refer to specific incidents from across the whole text.
- Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.
- An awareness of the text as drama and appreciation of the play onstage are a prerequisite of successful responses.

## General comments

Many candidates showed an extensive knowledge and demonstrated enjoyment of their set texts engaging with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on characterisation, stagecraft, mood and tone. It was pleasing to see how many candidates offered a genuine personal response to the plays, supported by detailed knowledge and apt textual support.

The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*. There was a considerable increase in candidates choosing to write on Lyn Nottage's, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. *Journey's End* remains a popular choice on the 0992 syllabus. There was one new text this series, Wole Soyinka's, *Death and the King's Horseman*, with very few responses seen. Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Candidates should be reminded that background information should be brief and relevant to the question. In answering questions on *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, lengthy introductions about the Civil Rights Movement and social and racial prejudice in the United States were unlikely to gain reward. In *Journey's End*, some candidates introduced responses with biographical notes on Sherriff, his war experience and historical facts about World War 1. Contextual background to historical plays should have some balance so simply asserting contemporary views that the men were fighting a 'futile war', and that it was portrayed as 'honourable', when we now know it was not, and that the 'men died for nothing,' is also unlikely to gain high reward. Candidates who focused on the text and the relevant points in the passage-based question, with Osborne's reference to the '*two warring parties*' being organised, and the poignant likelihood that they would not live to see another summer back home, were able to argue the case for the 'futility' of war more strongly. Similarly, in responses to *Iago*, some candidates lost focus on the character as a construct of Shakespeare and included lengthy detail about Machiavelli's, *Il Principe*, losing focus completely on the actual question.

It is essential that candidates read the question carefully and think about the implications before starting to write. It was pleasing to see an increase in candidates writing a brief plan to help them to select the most important points to include, and the most suitable material to use to support these points. When answering the passage-based question, the whole passage should be read to avoid missing key points. For example in **Question 5a** of *Othello*, many candidates missed his likely safety in the last line of (*Within: A sail, a sail, a sail!*). Successful answers wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example,

'fascinating', 'dramatic', 'striking' or 'vividly'. These were used to help them to select the most suitable material to answer the question and a link to the question was sustained throughout their answer. Less successful answers appeared to use a discussion of themes as a way of addressing the question and language; these discussions were not always relevant, tended to detract from the actual question and did not encourage a more appropriate selection of material to answer the question.

Too often, candidates wrote lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot or listing issues, including a list of the techniques the writer had used, including punctuation, which they would analyse in their answer. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. However, whilst some candidates understand and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. In an examination with 45 minutes to write a response these are unproductive ways to start an answer and there is little to reward in responses which list the range of punctuation the writer uses in the text. For example, what is an Examiner to make of comments like these in scripts: '...the use of exclamation marks makes this scene dramatic...' or '...the use of comma and semi-colon creates an almost asyndetic list as Trotter worries for Stanhope...'? The most successful answers explored the use of techniques in context to show a clear understanding of the effect achieved: for example, the use of pauses in **Question 2a** to indicate the speaker thinking about how to change the subject to a less awkward one.

Candidates need to remember that drama is visual and uses language that has an impact on an audience. The most successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as performance, referring to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. These were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts. Successful responses focused clearly on dramatic impact and how the audience were made to feel. There was successful reference to dramatic irony, foreshadowing, tone and stage directions. Candidates who focused on stage directions, and what they conveyed to the character, and watching audience, as well as the impact of asides and soliloquies were able to demonstrate greater awareness of drama. Less successful responses whilst making some valid comments on methods tended to limit the effects to, 'make the audience interested to see what happens next'. Whilst seeing a production is a valuable experience, contributing to a clearer understanding of text as performance, candidates need to remember that responses should focus on the text and not on the range of films, or live performances, they have seen. There is no requirement that they write about how they would direct scenes, how characters should deliver lines, behave or move around the stage.

Most candidates know that close reference to the text and relevant quotations are needed to support ideas to achieve highly. However, some candidates work through the extract, line by line, writing out a quotation and then offering paraphrase, sometimes followed by the statement: 'which makes it such a dramatic moment in the play', without exploring how it is made dramatic. To achieve a coherent, relevant response to the question, the argument should come first, followed by a supporting quotation, containing a link to the task. Candidates should explore language in context and not choose one or two words to analyse with little or no concept of their significance in the text. For example, in **Question 5a**, many candidates highlighted the words, 'heaven' and 'pray', devoid of any context and commented on the importance of religion and heaven and hell in Shakespeare's time, failing to understand that the reference to heaven regarded the storm preventing the speaker from seeing anything between the sky and the sea.

Time management was good with very few unfinished responses seen. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text and to remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of the response.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This was a very popular text and question, eliciting many sensitive and thorough responses which explored the whole passage in depth. There was much unhappiness conveyed here and the most successful responses covered a range of the causes, supporting ideas with well-selected references and close analysis of how the writer conveyed them. Most candidates understood how Godfrey's grief at the loss of his wife, Sandra, has made him dependent on the Christian leader, Father Divine, allowing no entertainment on Sundays. This has made him wary of white people as seen in his misguided attempts to protect his daughters from visiting the Levys' because 'They

*white*' and by his reference to the '*Scottsboro boys*'. This has led to isolation and a lack of normal teenage entertainment for his daughters with no TV or radio to listen to at home, or by visiting the Levy's in the apartment above.

The best answers explored the stage directions and Ernestine's 'narration', breaking the fourth wall. Some argued effectively that the family's unhappiness is a result of them being unable to express their emotions: Godfrey attempts to '*restrain his sobs*' and writes in his notebook; Ermina's twitching leg indicates her repressed stress – she wants to go to the Levy's which is forbidden, and Ernestine talks to the audience giving her personal thoughts and commentary on what's happening. She is able to voice what the audience already sees: Father Divine's hypocrisy in marrying a '*spotless white virgin*'; her sarcasm at the sounds of the Levy's laughter, '*only white folk can laugh on Sunday*'; Godfrey's bribery of them with cookies rather than giving of himself; the lack of hope for the future which is always '*on the horizon*', never '*here*'. Some were critical of Godfrey's failures as a father, ignoring the fact that he is grieving the loss of his wife and the children's mother, and trying his best as a single parent.

Less successful responses focused predominantly on racism, both the racial treatment of African-Americans and Godfrey's anti-white feelings. Too often these digressed making extraneous points about race relations and Jim Crow laws rather than focusing on the question and passage. Weaker answers worked through the passage with little focus on their 'unhappiness', believing that the Crumps did not have a radio when in fact, there is one in the flat, which remains switched off and poignantly acts as a reminder of the dead mother who won it.

- (b) This was not as popular as 1a. This question encouraged and resulted in some genuine personal responses. Responses ranged from brief character studies with little focus on what there is to admire about Lily, to detailed critical responses focusing closely on the terms of the question, '*To what extent*' does Nottage's portrayal persuade the audience to admire her. The most successful responses gave balanced views of Lily starting with her admirable qualities: her confidence and fashion choices which are empowering for the girls and her communist views in trying to stand up for workers' rights. Features of these responses were perceptive comments questioning how genuine her communism was whilst admiring her for not letting Ernestine parrot her views, encouraging her to hold her own views and to get educated. There was understanding that there was little place for a powerful black woman either in her home community or in a white dominated USA.

Lily's dramatic entrance as she burst on the scene with, '*Who? Precious. If that ain't a question! It's me,*' was noted and it soon became clear that this vibrant and glamorous figure was homeless and hungry. She was seen as admirable for standing up for Ermina as a mother-figure, straightening the girl's hair '*just like mama used to*', someone to inspire them and for the fun she brought into their lives which contrasted sharply with Godfrey's ideas for their upbringing. Better responses moved on to explore her less admirable qualities: her alcoholism and drug-taking; untruthfulness and laziness; jealousy of Gerte and her behaviour over Ernestine's graduation dress. Godfrey's unhappiness at her presence as she mocks his new life and sobriety was also explored. Her sad demise was only mentioned in a few responses, testament for a few candidates, that overall, Nottage generated more sympathy than admiration for Lily.

Less successful responses focused on her admirable qualities in bringing laughter into the girls' lives with her drunken dancing, sexual banter and undermining of Godfrey's behaviour but without exploring both sides of the character and with little textual detail to support ideas. Some responses totally overlooked anything but the positive qualities and, if mentioned, were sympathetic of her weaknesses.

## R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 2

- (a) This was a very popular text and question with a wide range of excellent answers. The most successful responses read the question carefully and understood the focus was on how the characters were 'strikingly portrayed'.

Most candidates responded with sensitivity to Trotter and Osborne recognising the unease at the beginning of the passage and the need for coping mechanisms. They understood the context of the moment, the morning after Stanhope's heavy drinking session, referred to by Trotter in the

passage. There was critical understanding of the anxiety created by the silence, the knowledge of the 'Big attack' and the dramatic impact of their different responses to the silence and to Stanhope. Their caring natures and concern for Stanhope were explored. Better responses understood the nuances of Trotter's words, arguing that he was not simply condemning or gossiping about Stanhope, lowering his voice not to be heard, but was relating his concern. The best responses recognised the change of subject which led to a brief nostalgic escape from the war as the two men shared their memories of their gardens at home. Many candidates pointed out that this made them seem 'like normal human beings just like the audience', with a life beyond the war they hoped to return to.

Most candidates recognised the role played by Osborne who listened with interest, responded encouragingly and shared Trotter's memories, allowing Trotter to enjoy his moment. Trotter's lengthy sentences, humour and use of food as a coping mechanism, with his swift change of topic from the Boche to his jam were noted. This was contrasted to Osborne's brief comments to change from awkward topics; from preparations for the raid and Stanhope's drinking to the weather and gardening. The men's use of dashes and pauses were explored effectively with some sensitive detail to the way Osborne responds to Raleigh's 'lowered head' with his brief '*Did he?*' before moving on to talk of the sun. Osborne's care of his men and his plants and Trotter calling him 'Uncle' were all selected as indications of his caring nature.

There was some close detail to the language, stage directions and the symbolic use of light and the sun, patriotism in the colour of the flowers and the cycle of life with their hopes for the summer. More perceptive answers pointed out how weak the sun was and the pathos that they are not going to see the summer sun they long for.

Whilst there was awareness of the two men's different background and social class, less successful candidates were confused about Trotter's speech and argued he 'could not speak properly' as he was of a 'lower social class', rather than specifically the fact that he drops his 'aitches'. The weakest responses worked through the passage commenting on what was 'striking' about the war and dugout, rather than what the audience learns about the characters at this moment. There was confusion between the two men and their fear and anxiety were exaggerated. Some considered Trotter was a simple-minded man whose main role was to provide comic relief and could not understand why he should change from talking about the war to ask for the jam.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question but most candidates were able to engage with the relationship in detailed, personal responses. Most answers traced the friendship in a chronological manner, knew the text well and were able to identify key scenes where the relationship is clearly portrayed: Raleigh's arrival and initial conversation with Osborne; Stanhope's horror on seeing him; the censorship of the letter; the climatic scene after Osborne's death and the final scene following Raleigh's fatal injury and ultimate death. The most successful answers showed critical understanding and the dramatic impact as the hero-worshipping young boy, just out of school, arrives and is unaware of how the war has changed Stanhope. Better answers explored his enthusiastic comments about Stanhope and ironic recounting of Denis's anger at the boys' drinking at school. They explored Osborne's subtle attempts to forewarn Raleigh that Stanhope might have changed.

There was understanding of the compelling nature of the friendship and the deeper reasons for Stanhope's shock at having Raleigh join his company: his insecurity and shame at being 'found wanting'. Better answers explored the powerful moment when Osborne comforts and supports Stanhope after Raleigh's arrival, and by reading what Raleigh had written about him. His fear that Raleigh would have informed his sister, Stanhope's girlfriend, that he was an alcoholic and a monster, proved to be totally unfounded. The dramatic nature of Stanhope's language here as he demands the letter, '*Give me that letter,*' and the stage directions, '*shouting*' and '*trembling*' and at other times, were frequently highlighted.

Stanhope's powerfully dramatic reaction to Osborne's death and furious conflict with Raleigh were also effectively explored. The best answers understood Stanhope's underlying concerns for Raleigh in his attempt to prevent Raleigh going on the raid by offering to go himself, and particularly following Raleigh's fatal injury. There was some sensitive detail to their use of first names 'Jimmy' and 'Denis', in Raleigh's final moments as it re-established the intimacy of their pre-war relationship. This was contrasted with Stanhope's previous anger at the use of his first name as he now desperately tries to keep the dying Raleigh comfortable.

Less successful answers were unable to recall specific textual details to support points. This resulted in general comments on their friendship and much retelling of the scenes where Osborne puts Stanhope to bed or calms him down when he is angry over the prospect of Raleigh informing his sister of Stanhope's drinking problem.

### WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

#### Question 3

- (a) A relatively small number of candidates answered this question. Most candidates were able to engage with Elesin's arrogance, love of women, selfishness and the extent he would go to in order to satisfy his desires. They understood the importance of keeping Elesin happy and the context of being the King's Horseman. The most successful responses condemned his love of life and the irony in him believing he was a '*man of honour*' whilst taking advantage of his position to satisfy his lustful desires. They saw the warning signs that Elesin was not ready to make his journey through ritual suicide, and Iyaloja's understanding of this. Better answers focused on the ways Soyinka made this dramatic, exploring the hyperbole in describing the woman he desires, and the women being unable to understand his poetic use of language. His manipulation of Iyaloja and her reasons for not refusing his request for her son's betrothed were understood – the catastrophic impact on the future of Yoruba society if Elesin failed in his duty. For some candidates the treatment of the young woman was the most dramatic aspect of the passage as her consent was neither sought nor given.

Less successful responses worked through the passage explaining what was happening with little focus on the dramatic nature of the moment or understanding of the language.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question but all found Simon Pilkings to be arrogant in his total disregard for the Yoruba people and culture. Candidates engaged with the terms of the question and most conveyed their hatred for his sacrilegious actions in appropriating Yoruba Egungun costume for a 'fancy dress party' to impress the prince. This was contrasted to the Yoruba King's journey to the underworld, without his Horseman, whose ritual suicide was delayed due to his arrest by Pilkings. There was some comment on his prejudiced language and disdain for Yoruba and Muslim beliefs considering them '*nonsense*' and '*mumbo-jumbo*'. Both his offensive language to describe the people as '*sly, devious bastards*' and his arrogant attitude towards his wife were strongly criticised. Better answers offered a balanced approach, respecting him for doing his duty as the British Colonial District Officer, noting his assistance to Olunde and acknowledging his misguided attempt to save a man from performing what he considered a barbaric act of suicide rather than a ceremonial death ritual.

Weaker responses gave a character study and were unaware of his job, with some thinking he was a police officer. They portrayed him as a stereotypical white racist without any personal engagement or comment on how this made them feel about him.

### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

#### Question 4

- (a) This was a popular text and question and there was a wide range of work seen. Many candidates responded to this question by providing a description of Viola in the passage, rather than focusing on how her introduction is striking. Most understood that after the shipwreck, finding herself in a strange land, she has to use her wits to find employment and provide a safe future for herself.

The most successful answers considered her independent spirit, courage and confidence, as seen in her swift change of mood from being mournful over the loss of Sebastian to one of optimism for the future. Her distress was noted and stronger responses linked this more explicitly to the ideas of female assertion and Elizabethan views of women. They were able to compare Viola's and Olivia's responses to the loss of a brother and commended Viola for her down to earth and unconventional approach within Elizabethan society. Better answers understood Shakespeare's methods in setting up later events with the introduction of both Olivia and Orsino, and the idea of unrequited love. They understood her dramatic function as she establishes the central themes of appearance versus reality and mistaken identity. Most candidates quoted Viola's words, '*Conceal me what I am*' and explored her decision to disguise herself as Cesario, commenting on the staging and the foreshadowing of later events, but without losing focus on the passage.

There was some close reference to the language and dramatic impact of the passage. The initial shipwreck provided drama with the possibility that Sebastian might be alive leading the audience to imagine the confusion should he reappear later in the play. There was close attention to Viola's inquisitive nature, her rapid questioning of the captain, and her ability to change plans quickly from initially wanting to work for Olivia to a decisive, *'I'll serve this duke'*. However, there was much confusion over her language. She was cited as speaking prose/blank verse/iambic pentameter but without any textual reference, or understanding, of the effects of the different speech patterns.

Less successful answers demonstrated some understanding of Viola's resourcefulness and optimistic character but there was a tendency to lose focus on her *'introduction'* after commenting on her plan to disguise herself, and to discuss mistaken identity in the rest of the play. There was much confusion over Sebastian's attempt to save himself by binding himself to the mast. Some thought it was Sebastian who had been seen riding away on the dolphin, and not the mythological character Arion, and that the captain had made it up to keep Viola calm.

The weakest answers wrote a character analysis starting from this point but lapsing into a simple retelling of the passage and later events. Some thought Viola was being blackmailed by the captain and paid him for his silence about her disguise. There was misunderstanding of Elysium with some thinking Sebastian had landed in another country.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question. All candidates were able to identify the importance of mistaken identity in the play, focusing on how Olivia falls in love with Cesario/Viola and Cesario/Viola falls in love with Orsino. The most successful answers discussed the intricacies of the plot and how mistaken identity played a key role in developing and resolving it. The best answers explored the deeper implications of love as a form of madness and cited a number of cases of mistaken identity including: Feste's disguise as Sir Topaz and his disguise of his intelligence; the deception of Malvolio and the dramatic irony in the fact that the audience knows that Cesario is a woman. There was some understanding of comedy as tragedy averted, with the dangers of disguise, madness and cruelty (Malvolio's treatment) just about remedied by the final marriages. There was awareness of the audience's involvement, and enjoyment of the play, through Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony.

Less successful answers struggled to focus and covered a broad range of examples of mistaken identity without consideration of the dramatic impact created. There was little textual detail to support ideas leading to some very narrative responses. The weakest answers wrote generally about Twelfth Night in the Christmas period and the concept of the Lord of Misrule then simply narrated what happened in some incidents of mistaken identity. Some focused solely on the gulling of Malvolio and tended to retell the events without linking it to the terms of the question.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was also a very popular text and there were many insightful and thorough responses. The question required candidates to comment on the power of the scene as a dramatic opening to Act 2, so reference to later events was within the terms of the question. The dramatic presentation of the storm and its intensity was well understood, as was its symbolic echo of the emotional tempest to come. However, some candidates, in focussing on this foreshadowing aspect of the storm, provided too much detail on later events, losing focus on the passage.

The most successful answers identified the context, explored the passage in detail, and were able to relate textual details of the extract to broader themes of the play. They noted how the portrayal of Othello's courage and bravery lent greater impact to his downfall, with the violence of the storm foreshadowing the violence of Othello's temper and fury later in the play. Stronger answers contrasted Iago and Brabantio's descriptions of Othello earlier in the play with his depiction here as *'warlike', 'brave' and 'worthy'*. They understood the dramatic impact on the men, and of the audience, awaiting Othello's arrival and fearing for his safety during the storm. Better answers explored the irony surrounding Cassio's regard for Othello in light of future events and the knowledge that Iago intends to use him to bring down Othello. They commented on structural aspects, for example the contrast between Venice and Cyprus, the implications of the change of setting, and also in how the destruction of the Turkish fleet gives space for another kind of war to emerge. 'Well-selected textual reference' and 'close analysis of the language' were features of

these answers and there were perceptive comments on the descriptive imagery of the storm and the animalistic imagery of the '*monstrous mane*'.

Less successful answers were narrative in approach, working through the events and exchanges rather than exploring the tension on stage. They struggled with the context, who these characters were and who was safe or lost at sea. Whilst they understood the raging storm and destruction of the Turkish fleet, there was some misunderstanding of the language where candidates attempted to analyse individual words, rather than in the context of the passage. Weaker answers found the language difficult and worked through the text explaining words literally, for example the '*ribs of oak*' were human ribs, likely to be destroyed in the storm, and '*His bark*' referred to Othello 'as a dog'. Consequently, there was often little to reward in these responses.

- (b) This was a popular question and candidates responded enthusiastically to Iago making clear they found him a fascinating character. Many candidates argued that he, and not Othello, was the main protagonist as he drives the plot and controls character behaviour throughout. There was audience engagement and some candidates conveyed respect for his intelligence and disdain for his victims. The most successful answers explored how he uses the insecurities of his victims and how he manages to destroy Othello's whole personality through his mastery of language, and psychological manipulation. They were able to write sensitively about his pathological jealousy and the way in which his soliloquies, asides and the dramatic irony, draw the audience into an unwanted sense of knowledge and complicity.

Many wrote about his carefully prepared plans: managing Cassio's downfall; his manipulation of Roderigo and Brabantio and his manipulation of Othello through his language and use of the handkerchief. There was insight into Iago's language and the metaphor of the spider's web and pestilence poured into Othello's ear. The most successful answers explored how the style of Othello's language seemed to echo Iago's as the play progresses reducing him to brutish and monosyllabic: '*O, blood, blood, blood!*'. Iago's motives were discussed but better answers argued that these were unbelievable as motivation for Iago's campaign to destroy Othello. The strongest candidates concluded his lack of clear motivation remains a mystery and adds to Iago's fascination. They cited his refusal to speak at the end as evidence that Iago himself had no justification for his campaign to destroy Othello.

A few less successful answers used prepared character studies of Iago which would have benefitted from closer links to the question and the ways in which Shakespeare makes him such a fascinating character. Nevertheless, they were able to describe some of the incidents orchestrated by Iago, as well as possible reasons for his behaviour. Some used just two quotations, '*Honest Iago*' and '*I am not what I am*' and referenced Coleridge's 'motiveless malignity' but without exploring them further. Candidates who lost focus on Iago and wrote about Machiavellian schemes were often self-penalising. In the weakest answers, Iago was simply a baddie, evil to the core and the devil himself, though they were unable to support this with close reference to the text.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0475/23 (Open Text)  
Drama 33

## Key messages

- Successful responses showed a personal engagement with the text as drama and an awareness of stagecraft.
- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question and avoided introductions which consisted of plot summaries or lengthy discussions of historical background. Effective conclusions were more than a repetition of earlier points.
- A range of textual support and full analysis of references was a feature of the most successful responses. Direct, contextualised quotations are the best form of textual support.
- Contextualisation of the passage is important in passage-based responses, and selection of material from throughout the passage, including the ending, is essential. Close analysis of the language was a feature of successful responses.
- In successful discursive responses the question remained in focus and precise textual references from throughout the text were selected to support ideas.
- If literary terms and punctuation are identified but their intended effect is not considered, the response will not progress.

## General comments

Candidates demonstrated engagement with, and enjoyment of their set texts. Knowledge of the texts and an awareness of the drama on stage was often evident. The most effective responses showed critical understanding of the texts and made a perceptive and sensitive response to characterisation, stagecraft and language.

The most popular texts were *Journey's End* and *Othello*. *Twelfth Night* also proved a popular choice, and there was an increase in the number of candidates choosing to respond to *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. There was one new text this year, *Death and the King's Horseman*, with fewer responses seen. Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

It is necessary for candidates to remain closely focused on the key terms of the question, such as 'powerfully', 'dramatic', 'significant' or 'fascinating', in order to produce a successful response. It was pleasing to see candidates paying attention to the key ideas in the question and referencing them in their responses. A brief plan is a good idea to help candidates choose relevant material for inclusion, and to help them to remain focused on the question. It is always worthwhile for candidates to spend time annotating a passage before attempting the question.

Candidates should be reminded that if historical context is included in a response, it should be brief and relevant to the question. Lengthy introductory paragraphs on Sheriff's experience of war, or on women being viewed as possessions in Venice, were unlikely to gain reward. If such topics are outlined briefly and linked to the text, such as reference to Brabantio's comment about Desdemona, '*She is stol'n from me*', the response will engage more clearly with the text.

Setting the passage in context at the start of the response is important in a passage-based question. This is very helpful in demonstrating understanding of the structure of the text. An effective introduction should not be a lengthy discussion of historical context, a summary of the plot or a list of the writer's techniques; rather it should briefly set the passage in context. The response should consider the key terms of the question, the events of the scene and an exploration of the writer's methods in conveying his or her intentions to the audience. Brief well-selected references should be analysed fully. Less successful responses tended to paraphrase quotations from the passage, stating that they were dramatic but without explaining why. The

strongest answers to discursive questions chose a range of material from the text as a whole and used well-chosen, brief references to support points. As the Level Descriptors indicate, a reasonably developed response can be improved by 'integrating much well-selected reference to the text'. Some less successful responses appeared to address the question through a general discussion of the themes of the play. This approach was often not relevant to the question and meant that selection of material was not effective.

A clear awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage was a feature of successful responses which sustained engagement with the visual and aural nature of the drama and the impact on the audience. Referring to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'text' or 'book' demonstrated this awareness. Stronger responses commented on the dramatic impact and how the audience were made to feel, focussing on stage directions, foreshadowing and dramatic irony to demonstrate their understanding. Some weaker responses tended to summarise the plot, listing knowledge about the play but with no link to the question. These responses often limited their comments on the effects of staging to, 'making the audience want to know what happens next'.

Exploration of literary techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing was often successful. However, many responses tended to point out such techniques with no exploration of their effects. Similarly, punctuation was often referred to, with no consideration of the effects in context. Any techniques referred to should be supported and their effects fully analysed, which helps build a well-developed response.

It was noted that there was a deterioration in handwriting, and although this syllabus does not assess spelling, punctuation and grammar, candidates should be aware of the importance of writing legibly and accurately to convey their ideas clearly.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) In general, there was clear personal engagement with Ernestine's development, her independence and courage in speaking up against Godfrey in a way which she would not previously have done. Many candidates expressed a heartfelt connection with Ernestine.

Stronger responses acknowledged that Ernestine exits into the real world rather than the movie world, but as one candidate put it, she has become 'the main lead in her own film'. This level of response also discussed Ernestine's turning away from Godfrey, literally and metaphorically – away from his religious beliefs and plans for her, and rejecting Father Divine's choice of name, '*Darling Angel*'.

Many candidates expressed a feeling of admiration for Ernestine achieving her diploma and how she deals with her struggles against poverty, racism, and the low expectations of her father. Similarly, there was focus on the family's pride in Ernestine's achievement and how this pride is clearly connected with a feeling of happiness, therefore showing relevance for the question. Many responses commented on and understood Ermina's feelings for Ernestine, and how she will miss her. This was often conveyed through Ermina's comment, '*Better not!*' in reference to Godfrey possibly damaging the diploma if he takes it to work to, '*show it off to the boys.*'

Comments about the staging of the passage were often effective. There was discussion of the lighting presenting Ernestine as the main focus of the scene and the visual effect of the decorations and cake signifying the efforts that the family have made, despite their poverty, and their feelings of pride and love for her. The fading light and Ernestine smiling at the end of the scene, was referenced as impactful and significant in showing her having overcome barriers to become her own woman.

There was some confusion regarding the sewing of the graduation gown, with some candidates thinking that Ernestine's mother sewed it before she died, and others not understanding the importance of Lily's parting gesture of sewing back the lace collar, showing her love for and approval of Ernestine.

In weaker responses, overall coverage of the passage was limited. In particular, discussion of Ermina was absent, and Gerte's contribution to the scene, her reassurance of Godfrey, was often

missed. There was often little or no reference to the effects of the lighting and staging and there were many inaccurate references to the 'Crumbs' family rather than Crump.

- (b) Very few responses were seen. Of these, the stronger answers were able to identify the various racial tensions – the obvious racism towards people of colour, but also the tension caused by Gerte and Lily and her politics. Weaker responses did not progress beyond this; they did not develop on the issues created by Gerte, or the Levy's. Most responses did not show an understanding of the racial tensions between the German people post-war and Jews. Some responses focused on Lily's response to the racism she has experienced and her relationship with Gerte to explore the theme of racial tensions, but these responses often did not broaden the discussion to the context and wider society.

## R.C. SHERIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 2

- (a) This was a very popular question and provoked many impassioned personal responses to the futility of war, which were enjoyable to read. Candidates generally engaged well with this passage, showing understanding of the men's awareness of the suicidal nature of the raid, Osborne's care for Raleigh and his wish to shield him from the truth about the raid. They understood that Osborne is resigned to his fate and worries more about Raleigh than about himself. There was some comment on the High Command's apparent lack of concern at the loss of life which results from their plans, questioning the efficacy of a leadership which would send characters to their inevitable deaths. Many candidates referenced the brotherhood of the soldiers and their reaction to the young and naïve Raleigh being selected to join the raid, which added further pathos to the scene.

The dramatic tension of the passage was explored convincingly by many candidates with comment on the characters' fast-paced dialogue, short sentences, pauses and use of punctuation in creating dramatic impact. It was pleasing to note that candidates considered the silences (indicated by stage directions) in conveying Osborne's reaction to his fate, creating tension and encouraging the audience to consider the effect of war on soldiers who live with the normality of terror. Likewise, there were observations on Trotter's euphemistic use of language linked to how the violence of war has become 'normalised' to the characters.

Trotter's tone shift from, '*It was murder.*' to, '*Doesn't this tea taste of onions?*', was widely commented on with varying degrees of success. Some candidates effectively discussed Trotter's coping mechanisms of food and humour and there were some unusual comments about the significance of the onions, representing the tears of loss or the stink of death. Weaker responses became sidetracked at this point by general discussion of the unpleasant living conditions in the trenches, therefore drifting from the passage. Stronger responses understood the fact that the book which Osborne turns to at the end of the passage is '*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*', and that this is his way of escaping the horror of the impending raid.

In weaker responses there was some misunderstanding of Trotter's status and of his character, with some candidates thinking that his words show arrogance or that he is glad that Raleigh has been chosen to go on the raid; or that he is 'carefree'. Many candidates did not understand the significance of Trotter's description of the previous raid and what it says about the nature of the High Command and its importance for Osborne's upcoming raid. This level of response also tended to lack coverage of Mason's part in the passage.

A language point which was often covered, even in weaker responses was discussion of the repetition of the word '*murder*' and how it shows the soldiers' understanding of the likely outcome of the raid. On this topic, the foreshadowing of Osborne's death in the raid was often discussed.

- (b) In general, candidates engaged well with this text and were able to show sympathy and compassion towards the soldiers' plight. Responses to this question generally engaged effectively with the character of Stanhope.

There was often a good balance of ideas about what it means to be a hero, with his flawed nature being explored as well as his qualities, and the idea that being a hero is a burden to him.

Many candidates showed both empathy and sympathy towards Stanhope when addressing the question and commented on the suffering he has endured at such a young age in his position as a

Captain. Candidates referenced Stanhope's dependence on alcohol and were able to identify his drinking as a coping mechanism. There was considerable comment on Raleigh and his hero-worship, with some discussion of Stanhope's unfounded suspicion of him and linking this to his state of mind. Raleigh's role in allowing us a window to Stanhope's pre-war self was a useful way to allow the audience's sympathy for Stanhope to be deepened. Similarly, Stanhope's own view of himself as lacking heroic qualities added to the complexity of the discussion.

Stronger responses were able to consider the nature of heroism and explored Stanhope's courageous acts in volunteering for raids and being awarded the MC for his bravery in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. When considering Stanhope's relationship with the men under his command such as Hibbert, Osborne and Raleigh, candidates took the opportunity to explore his caring nature despite the mental turmoil he himself is under. Insightful comments considered how he is viewed by other characters to consider the extent to which he is a hero, such as Hardy's criticism of his drinking, Raleigh's hero-worship and Osborne's fatherly care. Stanhope's military competence and hard work were often presented as admirable aspects of his character, adding to his heroism.

Stanhope's care for his men, his encouragement of Hibbert (contrasted with his dramatic threat to shoot him) and his tender treatment of Raleigh as he dies, were all given of examples of his heroic nature. There was some discussion of how there is no such thing as a hero during war, just a human being doing their best, but being flawed.

Less effective answers provided a basic 'yes' or 'no' response with limited discussion and exploration of the term, 'hero'. Responses which gave a simple character sketch did not fully address the terms of the question.

### **WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman***

#### **Question 3**

- (a) Few responses were seen to this question. Some candidates engaged well with the idea of Jane's hypocrisy towards Olunde and her ignorance of Yoruba culture, even though she is slightly more considerate than her husband. The most convincing responses focused on the term 'strikingly' in conveying the conflicting attitudes to ritual suicide.

Successful responses were able to identify how Olunde allows the audience to understand the Yoruba world more easily. There was valid comment on his vocabulary and complex sentence structures in establishing him as an intelligent individual who expresses his views on the hypocrisy of the British very clearly. Successful responses considered his accusatory tone and language when describing the sheer magnitude of the damage the British have inflicted on their own people. The suicide of one person to maintain the balance of the universe in Olunde's view, is mild compared to the mass murder of thousands of young men for the sake of the Crown. It is his comments on the flaws of the British which in part, contribute to addressing the term, 'strikingly' in the question.

Insightful responses recognised Jane's confusion when understanding Olunde's attitude to ritual suicide. Likewise, discerning responses commented on Olunde's confusion over Jane's idea that he could either inhabit the Yoruba world or the Western world. Jane's failure to realise that Olunde feels perfectly comfortable in inhabiting both and has no intention of rejecting either, contributes to her incredulity. Effective responses mentioned that Olunde shows understanding of Jane's culture, but owing to her arrogance and closed mind, she has no understanding of his.

Stage directions were often discussed by candidates to show understanding of and insight into a character and their emotions. In the passage, Jane's ironic shock and disgust shown by her scream, contrasts to Olunde's calm and unemotional justification of Elesin's suicide. The impact of the staging effects of the drums and how they enhance the tension surrounding the uncertainty of what is happening in the village were commented on by successful responses. However, many responses missed the irony of Olunde's assumption that his father has carried out his duty and committed suicide.

Weaker responses tended to narrate with no analysis of language or real engagement with the characters.

- (b) This question was successfully addressed by many candidates, with responses identifying the market women and girls as the carriers of values and traditions for the Yoruba people with responsibility for maintaining harmony. Candidates addressed the importance of Iyaloja and the marketplace, the choric role of the women and their steady presence throughout the play which increases the audience's understanding of their culture. Strong responses interpreted the term 'dramatic impact' in relation to the women and developed these points with appropriate textual support.

The women's initial reaction to Elesin was commented on effectively with candidates referencing his god-like status within the Yoruba community and his attachment to the market women. The high esteem the women hold him in, their desire to please him and their awe of him, all making his fall from grace even more ironic and dramatic. They also mentioned the bringing of fine clothes and their role in helping Elesin on his journey.

The failure of Elesin to carry out his responsibilities was explored successfully by candidates when the burden falls on the women of the market to restore the cosmic balance. There was some worthwhile comment on the powerful role of Iyaloja and her warnings to Elesin linked to foreshadowing. Similarly, valid comment was in evidence on Iyaloja upholding the values of the tribe and the scorn she heaps upon Elesin when he fails to carry out his duty. Successful responses identified the women's role when they carry Olunde's body to Elesin's holding cell to show him the consequences of his failing, their bitterness adding to the dramatic nature of the play.

There was some legitimate comment on the bride selected for Elesin and the significance of her role. Iyaloja's initial feelings of reluctance in allowing her future daughter in law to marry Elesin are overcome by her belief that Elesin cannot be denied his last wishes. Some candidates commented that following Elesin's death, the bride will be forced to live with Elesin's behaviour by caring for his child on her own and that she has no say in her marriage to him for fear of disrupting the cosmic balance. This once again, reinforces the significance of women in the play and the dramatic impact of Elesin's shortcomings on the Yoruba community.

There were some detailed observations on the women's derisive treatment of Amusa when they mock his masculinity. Held in low regard by the women, they view him as someone who does the colonisers' bidding; he is no match for the wit of the market women. There was relevant comment on the women's satirising of the British and in so doing, showing their power and ability in resisting suppression.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

### **Question 4**

- (a) The most successful responses engaged with the comedy of this scene, of Malvolio's contempt for the other characters and how he gives the appearance of madness by having made himself ridiculous in response to the letter. These responses often commented on Malvolio's arrogance and desire for status contrasted with his previous Puritan demeanour.

Candidates who identified the context of the scene were more successful than those who did not. Reference to the letter and its obvious effect on Malvolio in the way he speaks to the other characters was important, and successful responses were able to give a thoughtful comment about whether or not the prank had gone too far. These candidates were able to comment on Malvolio's ideas of superiority when thinking that Olivia has fallen in love with him and his subsequent treatment of characters in the scene, making the audience feel an even stronger dislike towards him, anticipating his punishment.

In terms of the scene being '*fascinating*', there was some useful comment on the supposed madness of Malvolio mirroring the other forms of madness within the play. There was some understanding of Maria's wish to push the prank further to seek revenge on Malvolio, making some response to the cruelty of her 'bullying'. The way that Sir Toby ridicules Malvolio was often left unexplored. There was often some reference to the imagery of hell and of Malvolio being later '*in a dark room and bound*', with the cruelty that this conjures up, but there were some gaps in understanding and little development of effects. Understanding of the irony of Fabian's words, '*If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction*', was evident in more successful responses. These responses also engaged with the dramatic irony within the passage.

Weaker responses paid little attention to the context of the passage and made little or no reference to the prank played upon Malvolio by the other characters or to Malvolio's ridiculous behaviour as a result of the letter. This level of response often assumed that the characters really think that Malvolio is mad, with no understanding that they are mocking him in order to convince him that he is demoniacally possessed. Understanding in these responses remained at a superficial level. Similarly, when responses simply narrated what they thought was happening and did not engage with the plot, this was unlikely to lead to high reward. Some candidates struggled to engage with this passage and understanding of the language was not secure in these responses.

- (b) Candidates were able to identify examples of love which is not returned, with much reference to the love triangle, but responses were often general and descriptive with little or no specific textual support or detailed analysis of language.

Orsino's love for Olivia was frequently cited and the most successful responses made some valid comment on his self-indulgent mood and the idea that he sees Olivia as an idealised object to satisfy his desire for love. The idea of Orsino enjoying unrequited love in the sense that he revels in melancholy and in dramatically expressing his grief when Olivia repeatedly rejects him, was explored. This level of response also identified the imagery of hunting and how Orsino's view of unrequited love is viewed as a predatory experience. Many candidates recognised the fickleness of his love for Olivia when he abruptly switches his affections to Viola. Likewise, there was some questioning of how genuine Olivia's grief was when her mourning period abruptly ends in order to pursue Cesario.

Stronger responses were able to explore the examples of unrequited love in detail and link them to comedy and madness. The role of disguise in unrequited love was explored, for example Viola's attempt to subtly convey her love for Orsino but his refusal or inability to understand, due the fact that she is disguised as a man. Her inner conflict and grief as a result of this was understood and discussed in stronger responses, and a sense of personal sympathy was expressed. Insightful responses referenced parasitic imagery when considering Viola's unrequited love for Orsino, indicating how painful the experience is for her and in so doing, contrasting it to Orsino's shallow and self-absorbed 'love' for Olivia.

There was much focus on Malvolio's 'love' for Olivia, with many candidates recognising that it is based on his ambition to improve his status and wealth, but these responses often lacked detail and development. Similarly, when Antonio's unrequited love for Sebastian was referred to, the subtleties were often misunderstood, and development was lacking. Overall, weaker responses relied heavily upon narrative to describe the action of their chosen moments.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

### Question 5

- (a) This was a very popular question. Important to this question was the interruption by Brabantio of a crucial state meeting concerning the Turkish threat, demonstrating his selfish and melodramatic nature. There was often clear focus on the contrast of Brabantio's anger with Othello's dignity in this scene and those responses which supported this with close textual evidence gained higher reward. Issues of racism were clearly understood, as was the objectification of women and Desdemona in particular.

Some candidates viewed Brabantio at a surface level, in that they empathised with his expression of 'grief' for the 'loss' of his daughter and felt sorry for him. What characterised a successful answer was when responses engaged more critically and recognised the overreaction and drama on the part of Brabantio, which contrasted with the calm Othello. Successful responses were able to identify Brabantio's quick succession of verbs with their negative connotations of suffering and violence in creating urgency, which added to the dramatic impact and anticipation of what was to be revealed in the scene.

Successful responses explored Othello's monologue and how his eloquence contrasts with his claim, '*rude am I*'. There was discussion of Othello's comment, '*I won his daughter*', suggesting an element of competition and an undercurrent of challenge, and also the suggestion that Desdemona is seen as a possession or prize to be won. At this point some responses drifted into a general

discussion of society or of women being seen as possessions in Shakespeare's time, losing focus on the passage as a result.

Less successful responses paid little or no attention to Othello's monologue (often incorrectly labelled as a soliloquy), or on Brabantio's emotional language of '*floodgate*', '*spells*' and '*witchcraft*'. Similarly, the Duke's words, his description of Othello as '*valiant*', his use of the repeated plosives of 'b', expressing his importance and force in deciding Othello's fate; and his promise to punish the unknown culprit, were often missed, meaning that coverage of the passage was limited. Many candidates completely ignored the powerful role of the Duke in the scene, but stronger responses understood the irony that, while sympathising with Brabantio at first, the Duke is not aware that the person being accused is Othello.

There was some effective discussion of setting – the important war council and the clash of Brabantio bringing his private concerns into this setting, although some responses mistakenly thought that Brabantio has taken Othello to court to accuse him of Desdemona's abduction. There was some misunderstanding that Brabantio has not been invited to the meeting – he has. Similarly, some responses thought that Othello is a stranger to Brabantio and were not aware that Brabantio knows Othello and has hosted him at his house, previously showing respect and admiration for him. Brabantio's racism towards Othello was sometimes missed, or very general remarks were made about racism.

- (b) This question allowed candidates to explore the characteristics of Cassio, with stronger responses able to consider both the positive and negative aspects of his character. There were some effective personal responses which provided a sense of balance, showing sympathy for Cassio due to his lack of knowledge about how he is a gullible victim of Iago's manipulation. They commented on how he is also a victim of Othello's rage, losing the trust of a well-respected friend. It was often stated that he has done nothing wrong, and many candidates expressed indignance at his treatment. The balance was provided in the most successful responses with an awareness of Cassio's weaknesses such as his lack of will power to resist alcohol in the face of Iago's persuasion and his resulting involvement in a violent and chaotic fight. His attitude towards women, in particular his dismissive manner towards Bianca was also discussed.

More straightforward responses detailed how we are encouraged to see Cassio as a true gentleman unwittingly trapped in Iago's web of lies. Unfortunately, some candidates lapsed into narrative here, making a list of Iago's wrongdoings towards Cassio which leads to his dismissal by Othello and how we are persuaded to feel sorry for him because of this. These responses provided little or no analysis, and indeed, some responses completely lost focus on Cassio, often resulting in an essay about Iago.

Cassio's repetition of '*Reputation!*' provided the basis of many responses which explored his priorities with varying degrees of success. Stronger responses expanded this into an analysis of the imagery in '*...what remains is bestial.*' It was pleasing to note how some candidates were able to contrast Iago's misogyny towards Desdemona in using debased language in comparison to Cassio's chivalrous and respectful language, which shows his admiration for her.

Stronger responses commented on the fact that Cassio's status is restored at the end of the play, when he becomes Governor of Cyprus; he is reconciled with Othello, and that this may give comfort to the audience. A few responses were based on the mistaken idea that Cassio dies at the end of the play and some stated that Cassio suffers from racism as he is from Florence, but these points were overstated.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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## **Key messages**

- Most candidates read the text carefully, make good use of the bullet points and provide supporting evidence and technical analysis to support their interpretations.
- Focused comment on the effects of language is more important than simply identifying literary techniques.
- Individual words and images received focused attention but need to be analysed in the context of the whole text.
- The strongest responses consider alternative interpretations and evaluate on the basis of evidence instead of making assumptions.
- Although handwriting is not part of the assessment, clarity of expression will certainly help strong candidates to make their points more effectively.

## **General comments**

Examiners reported very positively on the strengths of candidates' answers to the Unseen texts in this session. Candidates clearly appreciated the choice offered to them, and there were many responses to the Prose passage even if the Poetry question remains more popular. Candidates enjoyed engaging with issues as well as language, and most responses showed understanding well beyond the literal meaning and some effective analysis of the writer's methods and consideration of the text's impact on the reader. Assessors feel the quality continues to improve, and that must in part be a result of the attention paid to these reports, and to effective teaching and preparation.

Misunderstandings can usually be avoided by careful reading of the text. The stem question and the supporting bullet points are intended to help shape candidates' responses and guide them towards valid interpretations. It is also important that candidates pay attention to the rubric which precedes the question as this clarifies any uncertainty about the nature of the situation, the characters involved and the genre of the text. Some candidates nevertheless persist, like Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, in insisting that the poem means whatever they want it to mean, pursuing symbolic readings which go against the grain of the introductory material, and the grammar of the poem's own syntax. This is where context is important in an unseen text, and in the relationship of a word or image to its place in a sentence. While candidates can construct personal readings of their own around the language of the poem, these interpretations are unlikely to show the clarity of understanding, convincing and coherent argument and sensitivity to details of language and context which will be evident in the strongest scripts.

The bullet points are a helpful guide for many candidates in structuring their responses, timing their answers and paragraphing effectively. However, it is not necessary to keep repeating the words of the bullet points: they should be a starting point, but a strong script will have its own argument and points to make.

Candidates are always keen to demonstrate their knowledge of literary terms. Terms such as hyperbole, enjambment, anaphora, caesura, metaphor and polysyndeton were used frequently, but not always with understanding or followed by a clear explanation of their effects. Nor was it always understood that prose narrative has its own technical terminology which is different from that of poetry. Some candidates focused so much on finding features, that they lost sight of the text as a whole. The single-minded focus on language features often led to a lack of attention to the question and little evidence of understanding the impact of the text as a whole. Especially for weaker candidates, literary terms are sometimes a hurdle as they focus too much on the technicality and too little on the impact. Precise naming of terms is not necessary for a higher-level mark, and candidates who identify literary techniques correctly may not actually show understanding of the text.

Long quotations are generally unnecessary. Candidates should be encouraged to quote only the parts of the text that they need as evidence. However, particularly in poetry, candidates should read the entire line that they are quoting to ensure that the lines they quote are interpreted correctly in the context of the line, phrase and sentence in which they occur, or misinterpretations are likely. Comment on effects needs to be clearly linked to the words quoted and their place in the text: generalised comments like ‘it adds emphasis/makes the reader read on/makes it dramatically effective/makes you feel you are there’ are unlikely to be rewarded highly. While good word-level analysis helps candidates in the middle range of ability, the higher levels ask for a clarity of understanding which is demonstrated through a consistent interpretation and an overview of the text as a whole, which is probably obvious from the first paragraph of the answer. It is always pleasing to see structural analysis of sound, rhythm and form in responses to poetry, and an appreciation of narrative viewpoint, development and changes in focus in responses to prose.

Quality of written communication is not assessed in this paper, but strong scripts nevertheless tend to be well-written, often impressively so, and to advance a consistent interpretation and argument. They are also likely to demonstrate a degree of Keatsian negative capability, not jumping to conclusions but working out their ideas after weighing up alternative readings. Instead of imposing an interpretation, these candidates will evaluate the evidence. They will also avoid repetition and will consider the implications of their reading of the text in order to reach interesting conclusions that do not simply repeat points made in their introductions and in the body of their answers.

It is therefore clear that a good response will be a well-planned one, not necessarily a long one. The candidate will have given due time to reading both texts before making up their mind which one to write about and re-reading the text they have chosen in order to underline key words and phrases for analysis before planning their answers, keeping the bullet points and their response to them clearly in view. They will therefore have made good use of the recommended reading and planning time available. When writing, they will have developed points from their observations about language, structure and form in order to reach conclusions about the writer’s purpose as well as their methods. Their argument will be clear, and they will take care to ensure that their own expression, choice of vocabulary and even their handwriting try to match the clarity of that interpretation in order to communicate their personal and critical response effectively. Although this syllabus values personal response, at a higher level that response should also be critical, with a clear understanding of what the writer wanted to achieve and why, looking at language in terms of its emotive effect on the reader.

Teachers can usefully prepare candidates by breaking down the task into strong introductory comments, focused comment on language and interesting and evaluative conclusions.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

‘Meltwater’ by Maggie Butt, really struck a chord with the majority of candidates who chose to explore the poem. Candidates often responded passionately to the stark warning embedded in the poem and voiced by the ‘meltwater’ itself. There were, as ever, some candidates who clearly had not read the introductory rubric to the poem that preceded the Question. Candidates should be encouraged always to read any associated information before reading the text of **Questions 1** and **2**, as there will always be valuable information to help candidates get their bearings before they first confront the content that the unseen texts present.

In the case of ‘Meltwater’, the introduction was very important, as candidates were clearly told that ‘the water speaks directly to the reader’ immediately indicating that the poetic voice is the water, and that the reader is being addressed in the vocative case. Candidates are also told, in the introduction, that the poet imagines a future in which there is a global release of meltwater from glaciers and icecaps. This puts all that the ‘Meltwater’ speaks into a context that many young people are keenly aware of. Armed with these clues, most candidates were able to make sense of the poem and better answers went much further than making sense, as many candidates appeared to have been inspired by the power of the writing and its terrible message and they offered some detailed and some insightful readings of the text.

Not all candidates mentioned the form of the poem, but some did and offered some inventive and plausible suggestions about the effects that the poet was striving for. There were various interpretations of the poet’s use of all lower-case letters throughout the poem, with the exception of the capital letter in the title, which some suggested referred to the ‘name’ of the speaker and therefore was presented as a proper noun and duly capitalised. Some thought that the use of couplets sounded like a ‘heart-beat’, thereby making the water seem alive to the reader. Others suggested that the fluidity of the poem’s form, and the frequent use of

enjambement within it, was used to create the impression of flowing water. Some considered that the 'free-verse' replicated the unregulated force of the water as it grew in power and momentum, driving the poem forward to its chilling conclusion. Some astute candidates noticed that, while stanzas 2, 4 and 5 are end-stopped, the last 3 stanzas flow freely until the final prediction that 'nothing divides the waters from the waters'. Most candidates who commented on this aspect of the form of the poem suggested that the poet had employed this method to replicate how unstoppable the waters had become.

Most candidates who engaged with the language of the poem noted the progress of the water, from tiny raindrops to more substantial 'ice-cubes' – both presented in a 'domestic' setting – to a torrent, capable of 'submerging' fields, breaking out into surrounding natural habitats. Candidates offered a wide range of interpretations of the phrase 'infiltrate graves/raising the dead' which some read literally and others metaphorically. There was a general consensus, however, that raising the dead was a sacrilegious act which demonstrated the depth of the water's animosity toward humankind. Most candidates appreciated the poet's appeal to the senses – both directly, as the Meltwater instructs the reader to 'smell', 'watch', 'touch', 'feel' and 'see'- and indirectly, by providing the onomatopoeic sounds of firm ground reduced to 'swamp to ooze and squelch' a noise that the human reader may find 'disgusting', in the words of many candidates, but which, to the water, becomes a beautiful 'mud-symphony'.

Sensitive candidates noted the continuation of sounds across stanzas 4 and 5, despite the caesura, as the symphonic sounds are transformed into troubling 'gurgles' and 'trickles' that invade the sleep of humans and cause disturbed nights. Occasionally, candidates were side-tracked by the gloss on 'flotsam' and began to formulate a reading that involved literal rather than metaphorical ship-wrecks. Sometimes candidates missed the fact that 'reach for' was yet another injunction from the Meltwater to the reader, and they therefore missed the ominous, almost taunting, tone of the water as it envisages desperate humans looking for something to cling on to, 'after the deluge'.

The second part of the poem elicited some interesting interpretative ideas; candidates empathised with the 'homeowners' having to sweep sewage off their rugs. Some compared the theoretical and positive sounding 'cool chemistry' of the ice-cubes in the second stanza to the foul reality of a house full of 'river-sludge' in the sixth with some noting the 'matching' hyphenated structures emphasising the antithetical nature of the water in its frozen and thawed states. Many candidates noted the irony of the fact that the humans' tears are comprised of salt water which, if shed in desperation at the plight of the planet, only serve to augment the mass of water, as it threatens to engulf the world.

Some found stanza seven a little more challenging than the earlier stanzas but most recognised that the world, as we know it, had once been completely submerged and they linked that knowledge to the concept of the waters claiming their 'lost inheritance'. Meltwater's final instruction to the readers, to 'listen to the future' resonated clearly with most candidates. Some candidates referred to the original manifestation of the water as 'raindrops' merely 'winnowing' down a window pane and noted its more violent and pervasive impact upon mankind in the final stanza as the poet uses the compound adjectives 'rain-rocked' and 'lake-locked' to build to the climactic finale in which water regains its place as the dominant element on earth and 'nothing divides the waters from the waters'.

Examiners saw some extremely sensitive interpretations of the poem. There were, of course, more mechanical responses, and some candidates approached the text with less insight than others, but there was a generally very sound appreciation both of meaning and method demonstrated by a sizable proportion of candidates who selected this optional question.

## Question 2

While candidates normally do read and act upon the bullet-pointed suggestions for consideration, they do not appear, routinely, to read the introductory material. They should be encouraged to do so. Examiners saw numerous responses from candidates who appeared not to have availed themselves of the valuable background information to Marion's story. This was evident in answers that suggested that Marion's husband had left her for another woman or interpreted the source of Marion's unhappiness as her 'childlessness', or that Harry was one of Marion's children.

Candidates who choose to answer on the prose rather than the poetry often make their choice based on the idea that prose is less allusive and more straightforward to understand than poetry, but that is not always the case. Much prose writing, including Marion's story, uses a great deal of figurative language and there were many candidates who responded sensitively to Marion's sense of loss and disorientation that was conveyed through the writer's use of symbolism, for example, and through pathetic fallacy.

The passage set was actually a complete (very) short story and some candidates remarked that it had many features of a compact narrative poem. Most candidates recognised the narrative voice as that of a third person, omniscient writer who alternately describes the scene as if from Marion's point of view whilst describing Marion's inner thoughts about herself and her situation- both literal and metaphorical. Candidates quoted the sentence, 'Beyond the preoccupations of the moment, she studied where she really was' to support their ideas about the quite complex narrative style adopted by the writer and Marion's disorientated state. Other candidates noticed several parts of the story where the writer invites the reader to see Marion 'watching herself'. The first instance of this, that candidates picked up on, was the reference to the freeze-frame in the first paragraph, '...she paused. The moment held her like a freeze-frame in a film'. They also noted a similar occurrence in paragraph 8 where, once again, the writer describes Marion seeming 'to see herself from above' with the slightly depressed perspective that characterises Marion, 'she saw herself doubled over like an old woman'. In the final paragraph, too, some candidates remarked on the sense of artifice that is created by the writer as he describes Marion's 'lonely vision' as a 'primitive painting', now faded, but having been 'made herself'. One candidate aptly described the extract as a 'study in introspection'.

Most candidates appreciated the writer's use of colour, or the absence of colour, throughout the story. They noted that 'the sea was grey' and interpreted this as reflecting Marion's low mood. Similarly, they identified the moment when 'the gold of an afternoon converts to lead' as a comment on Marion's inability to cling on to the positive elements of the day; as one candidate expressed it 'as the sun sinks and gloom returns'.

Most candidates engaged with the central bullet point quite well and showed quite a secure understanding of what the 'couple in the middle distance' signified for Marion. Candidates often noted that the paragraph that describes the couple is replete with references to signs and symbols and that Marion interprets them as a signifier of her own young love for her husband, a love innocent and unaware of what fate had in store for them as a couple. Marion's instinct to cry out to the couple was noted by many candidates, who determined variously that she would either not have heard the cry as a younger woman, or that she would not have heeded it. A number of candidates suggested that Marion regretted loving so much and would have preferred not to have married Harry than to have to suffer her current 'heartache'.

Most candidates recognised the imagery at the beginning of paragraph 8 that likens Marion's sudden surge of nostalgia to the experience of receiving an electric shock or being struck by lightning. Some candidates ignored this and concentrated on Marion's gathering up of the debris of the day and reflecting upon the reality that Harry was dead and that something of her own person would never again feel fully alive. This was quite a challenging notion, but most candidates were able to tease out the meaning.

Fewer candidates understood the imagery surrounding Marion's belief that she was now destined to 'live the rest of her life in a tent'. Some candidates took this statement literally and speculated on whether or not this was a good future plan, given that she had two children to consider. A number of candidates commented on the proliferation of references to nature: to the sky, the clouds, the air, the sea, with some drawing an inference that Marion felt insignificant in the great expanse of the world around her. Not all candidates got as far as turning the page: those that did often noted the metaphor about her children, the 'fruits' of her marriage who represented a form of riches that she could still rate dearly.

There was some good work seen on the 'promise' that Marion appeared to believe was made to her by 'life' but which she now felt cheated of. For many, this was the culmination of a series of images and references throughout the passage that touched upon loss and/or abandonment. Candidates cited phrases including: 'the beach was almost empty', 'she felt lucid with loss', 'cannot bear to part with', 'lay abandoned', 'failed alchemy' to sum up Marion's sense of despondency.

Bullet point 3 prompted candidates to consider the significance of the final paragraphs in the story. Candidates who included these paragraphs seemed to recognise that, much as a final stanza in a poem, these closing paragraphs encapsulated the writer's meaning. There were several striking responses to Marion's realisation that it was not life that had promised her fulfilment and happiness but Marion herself who, in her own heart, had sketched out a perfect future, using brightly coloured 'paint' that could not survive 'the corroding salt sea air' of time.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 0475/42**  
**Unseen**

## **Key messages**

- Most candidates read the text carefully, make good use of the bullet points and provide supporting evidence and technical analysis to support their interpretations.
- Focused comment on the effects of language is more important than simply identifying literary techniques.
- Individual words and images received focused attention but need to be analysed in the context of the whole text.
- The strongest responses consider alternative interpretations and evaluate on the basis of evidence instead of making assumptions.

## **General comments**

Examiners reported very positively on the strengths of candidates' answers to the Unseen texts in this session. Candidates clearly appreciated the choice offered to them, and there were many responses to the Prose passage even if the Poetry question remains more popular. Candidates enjoyed engaging with issues as well as language, and most responses showed understanding well beyond the literal meaning and some effective analysis of the writer's methods and consideration of the text's impact on the reader. Assessors feel the quality continues to improve, and that must in part be a result of the attention paid to these reports, and to effective teaching and preparation.

Misunderstandings can usually be avoided by careful reading of the text. The stem question and the supporting bullet points are intended to help shape candidates' responses and guide them towards valid interpretations. It is also important that candidates pay attention to the rubric which precedes the question as this clarifies any uncertainty about the nature of the situation, the characters involved and the genre of the text. Some candidates nevertheless persist, like Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, in insisting that the poem means whatever they want it to mean, pursuing symbolic readings which go against the grain of the introductory material, and the grammar of the poem's own syntax. This is where context is important in an unseen text, and in the relationship of a word or image to its place in a sentence. While candidates can construct personal readings of their own around the language of the poem, these interpretations are unlikely to show the clarity of understanding, convincing and coherent argument and sensitivity to details of language and context which will be evident in the strongest scripts.

The bullet points are a helpful guide for many candidates in structuring their responses, timing their answers and paragraphing effectively. However, it is not necessary to keep repeating the words of the bullet points: they should be a starting point, but a strong script will have its own argument and points to make.

Candidates are always keen to demonstrate their knowledge of literary terms. Terms such as hyperbole, enjambment, anaphora, caesura, metaphor and polysyndeton were used frequently, but not always with understanding or followed by a clear explanation of their effects. Nor was it always understood that prose narrative has its own technical terminology which is different from that of poetry. Some candidates focused so much on finding features, that they lost sight of the text as a whole. The single-minded focus on language features often led to a lack of attention to the question and little evidence of understanding the impact of the text as a whole. Especially for weaker candidates, literary terms are sometimes a hurdle as they focus too much on the technicality and too little on the impact. Precise naming of terms is not necessary for a higher-level mark, and candidates who identify literary techniques correctly may not actually show understanding of the text.

Long quotations are generally unnecessary. Candidates should be encouraged to quote only the parts of the text that they need as evidence. However, particularly in poetry, candidates should read the entire line that

they are quoting to ensure that the lines they quote are interpreted correctly in the context of the line, phrase and sentence in which they occur, or misinterpretations are likely. Comment on effects needs to be clearly linked to the words quoted and their place in the text: generalised comments like 'it adds emphasis/makes the reader read on/makes it dramatically effective/makes you feel you are there' are unlikely to be rewarded highly. While good word-level analysis helps candidates in the middle range of ability, the higher levels ask for a clarity of understanding which is demonstrated through a consistent interpretation and an overview of the text as a whole, which is probably obvious from the first paragraph of the answer. It is always pleasing to see structural analysis of sound, rhythm and form in responses to poetry, and an appreciation of narrative viewpoint, development and changes in focus in responses to prose.

Quality of written communication is not assessed in this paper, but strong scripts nevertheless tend to be well-written, often impressively so, and to advance a consistent interpretation and argument. They are also likely to demonstrate a degree of Keatsian negative capability, not jumping to conclusions but working out their ideas after weighing up alternative readings. Instead of imposing an interpretation, these candidates will evaluate the evidence. They will also avoid repetition and will consider the implications of their reading of the text in order to reach interesting conclusions that do not simply repeat points made in their introductions and in the body of their answers.

It is therefore clear that a good response will be a well-planned one, not necessarily a long one. The candidate will have given due time to reading both texts before making up their mind which one to write about and re-reading the text they have chosen in order to underline key words and phrases for analysis before planning their answers, keeping the bullet points and their response to them clearly in view. They will therefore have made good use of the recommended reading and planning time available. When writing, they will have developed points from their observations about language, structure and form in order to reach conclusions about the writer's purpose as well as their methods. Their argument will be clear, and they will take care to ensure that their own expression, choice of vocabulary and even their handwriting try to match the clarity of that interpretation in order to communicate their personal and critical response effectively. Although this syllabus values personal response, at a higher level that response should also be critical, with a clear understanding of what the writer wanted to achieve and why, looking at language in terms of its emotive effect on the reader.

Teachers can usefully prepare candidates by breaking down the task into strong introductory comments, focused comment on language and interesting and evaluative conclusions.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

The poem 'Urban' by Nissim Ezekial, a poet who lived in Mumbai, proved popular and accessible to most candidates who chose this question. Most were able to identify the themes of isolation and loneliness, fragmentation, alienation, loss of identity and modernity. By paying attention to these themes and motifs, even less strong scripts were still able to demonstrate some deeper understanding of the poem and its commentary on urban life. All candidates were therefore able to articulate what the poem is about, who is speaking, and what emotions or ideas are being conveyed. Many made reference to the connotations of the title linking this to the past and present lives of the man presented. Only stronger scripts, however, took time to identify the structure and form of the poem and meaningfully analyse its language, paying attention to specific words and phrases. The best answers were able to step back from line by line/stanza by stanza analysis and focus on how the ideas develop in the poem, cross-referencing the layers of meaning and possible interpretations.

The majority of candidates took a chronological approach to analysis and also followed the bullet points. The opening sentence and the specific reference 'far away' enabled candidates to comment on the fact that his past life was physically and metaphorically in the distance. Many made points about the tone of the poem often identifying it as 'melancholy'. 'Dreams' of a past life in the countryside where the poetic voice was more 'spiritually and mentally fulfilled' were frequently juxtaposed with the man's current 'monotonous' life in the city. There were several different interpretations of 'broken roads' and the 'circles' tracked in his head, and these could be read as both literal – the conditions in the countryside (possibly as a reason for migration) and metaphorical in that he has 'broken' from the past. Many saw him as trapped in 'circles', which, for some, were circles of hell 'tracked within his head' in a recurring nightmare. Some applied these terms to the city rather than the country, but these ignored the grammar of the next sentence: because these are the images of his dreams 'before he wakes', these are clearly images from the man's past and ones he does not consciously control. Most candidates interpreted this stanza as having a negative tone – picking up on the

desolate language linked to broken/dry/dead etc. One response was that the dry river 'suggests disastrous, almost apocalyptic consequences of a completely barren wasteland.' The word 'claims' was often a discerning factor in identifying deeper understanding: when candidates explored why he would 'claim' to love it, this sometimes led to consideration of the writer's choice of third person narrative and distance from the man's emotions. The writer may be suggesting those emotions were ambiguous or that the man did not really understand them himself. Some candidates wanted to see this as an indication that the poem was a metaphor for a love affair: however, the introductory rubric makes it clear that this is about migration, whether willing or forced, and the title confirms that the countryside is seen from an urban perspective. As one candidate put it: 'the division between the dreamscape and physical plane is heavily blurred.'

The second stanza led to some very effective comments about the man's disconnection from his past close relationship with nature. Many wanted to find the 'pathetic fallacy here' and linked the negation of the natural world with his own negative feelings. The personification of skies born again at dawn is juxtaposed with dramatisation of the soothing touch of 'the shadows of the night'; strong candidates were sensitive to the sensuous nature of this description. Although some saw the image of the shadows of the night as sinister, others saw it as 'a motherly gesture of tenderness, like a mother gently closing a child's eyes' and talked of 'the sweet embrace of darkness in the night.' However, in his urban context the man negates all these, and strong scripts pointed out the words that do this: 'never', 'nor', 'neither', 'no' and binary oppositions of day/night, sun/rain and depth/height to show that this negation is all embracing. Some saw him as rejecting the seductions of nature. The day dawns 'silently' without a chorus of birdsong. Many believed that skyscrapers blotted out the man's view of the rising sun; similarly, some referenced urban pollution or the impact of artificial light which meant it was never truly dark; some thought this was a metaphor for his own depression and unwillingness to welcome a new day or find rest at night. Only a few linked this to the disturbing images of his dreams in the first stanza. Many candidates did find it easy to note and analyse the developing contrast between city and country and link this to the idea of disconnection. Further development of this point considered his present life as unnatural. The negations 'neither sun nor rain' and 'no depth or height' seen as symbolic of an artificial urban life with no natural variations in the weather/landscape, showing what the man's life now lacked. A restricted view in more than one sense.

The third stanza developed the theme of the man's waking hours, and the contrast between country and city, but also dream and reality. Many candidates commented on 'like a passion burns' as they identified it as a simile. Middle level candidates in particular, tended to see this image as negative. They interpreted passion as dangerous and burning as representing destruction; he is literally burning in the city but longing to return to the countryside. However, higher-level candidates were able to consider the ambiguity of this image and its possible interpretations. Such responses tended to explore the implications of 'passion' as a strong emotion that cannot be entirely controlled; there is something about the city that pulls/draws him into it and makes him want to be there, despite its destructive cost. Those who linked 'passion' to desire could more easily see why it would burn.

The man's past life was linked to a more solitary existence, as he dreams of being 'alone' instead of surrounded by the cacophony of the city and its 'traffic'; the verb 'floating' and its link to 'dreaming' emphasise that his past life is in his dreams, but the pull of the city is his reality now. Some candidates connected the 'away' of the opening line to the 'Away' of the penultimate line as the man now seems to be making a conscious, if reluctant, choice to turn to the city and that he has resolved to be away from the natural world he 'claims' he loves. This interpretation is consolidated by the final reference to 'kindred clamour close at hand' emphasizing the present familiar reality for the man as opposed to the broken/dead world of the countryside which is now 'far away'. The strongest readings explored the cacophonous alliteration of 'kindred clamour' and consonance in 'traffic turns', and the hard reality of what is close contrasted with the polysyndetic list of the natural landscape of his dreams. There was impressive commentary on the triplet 'beach and tree and stone', natural features diminishing in size, and ultimately lifeless. Some analysed the finality of the last line, with its suggestion that he was reconciled to his fate. While some candidates could not understand why he might live in the city if he did not want to, others could see that the poet might be dramatising the need to accept change in adult life, or the realities of forced migration. Some linked the imagery of dried and dying nature in the first stanza to contemporary concerns about climate change and the impact of urbanisation, which was a valid personal response, while more critical responses picked up the music of the verse and were able to see that the city has its music too.

Most candidates responded to the question by expressing pity for the man and concern about his mental state, feeling he could only articulate 'a dull ennui'. Others saw him as a representative figure showing how urbanisation has distanced us from nature. One said the title suggests "the poet is 'othering' this new environment". Another observed that 'the poet is using the city as a metaphysical conceit.' Impressive responses usually explored the structure and form of the poem, as well as its language and images: for example, the use of the present tense throughout reflected that 'this is happening now and will continue

indefinitely' or enjambment shows that 'the idea refuses to be obstructed by obstacles such as punctuation.' Most who commented on the rhyme scheme thought it reflected the rigidity of life in the city. Impressively, some looked in detail at the half-rhymes, or the interruption of enjambment by caesural pauses, as indications of the mismatch between reality and desires. It was very pleasing for Examiners to read such close engagement with the verse. One final exemplar will show this: 'The last three lines of the poem show an intermingling of the urban reality and the man's natural past further accentuating the influence and intrusiveness of the city. The enjambment of the fourth and fifth lines of the last stanza shows the blur of memories and realities. The fact that it is placed in the last stanza shows that this is the final consequence of 'Urban,' colonising the man's pure and precious past.'

## Question 2

In contrast, the prose extract from *The North Water* by Ian McGuire did not prompt such diversity of opinion and candidates tended to choose the same phrases for comment. The main difference between responses was that while some used the text as part of a narrative commentary and saw it as the reporting of a story about real people, others, prompted by a question which explicitly referenced 'the writing', critically addressed the writer's choices and the effects of the language used. Most saw the narration as third person omniscient, but a few found places where the reader was invited to see things as Sumner saw them, for example 'Where is Cavendish?' The narrative viewpoint is really close third person, tracking Sumner's thought process in the moment they come to him, as indicated by the choice of present tense. Some candidates appreciated the immediacy of this and its contribution to the drama, understanding that Sumner's perspective is necessarily limited. The suspicion was (rightly) raised that Cavendish might have deliberately left him to drown. The final sentence caused most disagreement. Some were convinced that Sumner died and used the reference to the sky as symbolic of heaven. Although the note defined 'harrowed' as streaked, one saw it as having the double meaning in the sense of it being a harrowing experience. Some thought that the ending was deliberately ambiguous, making the reader want to know what happened. There was general sympathy for Sumner's heroic struggle, his 'dance with death' as one candidate put it, and appreciation for the writer's skill in making the situation dramatic. However, candidates might have borne in mind that writers rarely kill their narrative focal points and principal characters early in their novels.

Many candidates wrote with understanding of deeper meaning, using well-selected references and clearly addressing the methods used by the author. Most candidates wrote about the dramatic decision at the gap between the floes when 'Sumner stops a moment.' These candidates often referenced Sumner's 'experience' as luring the reader into a false sense of security and belief that the jump would be easy for him. However, they also noted how language is used to create a 'sense of foreboding at the risk of the jump.' The ominous tone is heightened at the beginning by the mention of Sumner's 'bad leg.' There was recognition that the writer might have deliberately presented the jump as not too challenging, at least to Sumner: it is a 'short leap' and 'he has learned from experience' so he knows what he is doing; thus his over-confidence becomes ironic when he slips sideways. Some commented on slippery and sinister alliteration as beginning to indicate that circumstances, and perhaps nature itself, are against him. Referencing narrative structure, lots of candidates noted how the pace slowed to reflect Sumner's thoughts about the jump and his hesitation, followed by a spattering of commas to ramp up the pace as Sumner jumped and failed, contributing to the build-up of tension and drama. There were detailed observations about the weather, a number mentioning the 'claustrophobic' effect when 'snow fills the air'. Candidates conscious of the 'dramatic' identified hubris followed by nemesis, with the personified snow which 'fills the air all around' and 'whips against his face' as Sumner's antagonist in this tragedy. One candidate suggested that 'the pathetic fallacy here suggests that this is nature's way of physically restraining Sumner, acting as a warning.' Stronger candidates also focused on the language used to describe the setting, unpacking the description of 'black and icy waters' foreshadowing Sumner's demise. The simile 'clown-like' and adjective 'ludicrous' led to some perceptive comments from higher-level candidates especially about the lack of control and confidence exhibited by Sumner, his own sense of irony and the writer's almost Shakespearean intrusion of an incongruous comic note into the tragedy.

Candidates identified the 'multiple attempts' made by Sumner to survive the catastrophe of the clown-like fall and noted the 'resolute mindset of Sumner' might be the writer's way to cultivate more drama from the scene. Strong candidates identified a 'violent' semantic field of thrashing, straining, and flinging to help portray the 'fierce struggle' that Sumner was engaged in. Description of his struggles to save himself from the waters focused on the sensory deprivation of 'submerged and sightless', the desperate brutality of 'thrashes', 'flings', 'grabs' and 'heave', the unusual noun in 'drench of coldness', the active participles 'gasping' and personified blood 'roaring' in his ears. Some linked this to 'ferocious' to suggest it was as if Sumner was fighting a wild animal. Less successful responses leaned too heavily upon their understanding of the situation to explain how tension was created, rather than considering the methods used by the writer. The third bullet point was very helpful for candidates in forcing a response focused upon methods, and this

was where otherwise middling work became stronger, with discussion of pathetic fallacy and the violent personification of the snow. Many noticed personification of the ice creaking and yawning 'as it shifts', some detecting nature's indifference to his fate, and others suggesting a dormant force had been awakened and was out for revenge. As one of them put it: the ice was a 'great monster out to kill', adding that 'yawned suggests it has been summoned from a great sleep and it beginning to awaken'. Stronger candidates noticed the animalistic imagery associated with nature and giving power to the surrounding environment, in contrast to Sumner's lack of power in his current predicament. One candidate linked Sumner's position to the fact that he has been hunting and is pulling animal skins – this was effective use of the introductory information as the candidate gave a personal response/interpretation suggesting that this was nature's revenge for the hunting of wild animals.

The main supporting evidence used from the third paragraph was the reference to Cavendish leading to speculation about whether Sumner has been abandoned by Cavendish. Many noticed shorter sentences and saw these as indication of increasingly breathless desperation on Sumner's part. Descriptive details had less attention: more might have been made of sensory images in the narrative and structural patterns.

Candidates write a lot about rhythm and about sensuous and structural devices in poetry and could be encouraged to do so when tackling prose extracts. The short sentence 'he was alone' dramatises the extent of Sumner's own recognition of his abandonment and isolation. It contrasts with the lengthy sentences which present his repeated attempts to 'gain purchase' on the ice, and on his situation. Entirely on his own now, he is confronting forces much bigger than he is, with only 'his own power' to rely on, and not any form of external aid. The best responses made much of the idea that nature is his real enemy here: the seawater has agency as it 'fills his mouth', the gravitational tug of 'his sodden clothes' drags him down, and the ice threatens to crush as well as drown him. For some, it was nature, as well as the writer, that is taunting Sumner with the delayed narrative of disaster.

Candidates were alert to the structural device of rule of three: in this instance, it is not 'third time lucky' as each attempt to raise himself is more aggressive and suspenseful, teasing the reader with false hope before a further downward plunge in the falling action of the narrative. Sumner's belief, in the final paragraph, that the 'balance is shifting' was seen by one candidate, developing the idea of an ongoing fight, to show an 'inequality of power'; another felt that 'Sumner's belief that he is altering that harmonious balance is perhaps punished by nature.' Many wrote effectively about the cumulative effect of physical detail to convey the intensity of this moment, and how a small amount of critical time is dragged out almost endlessly, before Sumner inevitably succumbs to a stronger force. His 'ungodly effort' is in vain as the personified floe seems to deliberately make another 'sideways' move; he 'slips' again and as he 'slams' down hard appears to have been finally knocked down by his opponent, the ice, in the third round of an uneven fight. Stronger candidates were able to comment on the methods used to present the physical hostility of the environment, creating a dramatic scenario for Sumner's attempt to fight and conquer it. One candidate suggested the 'sharp angle of the ice' represented the hostile, dangerous threat of the landscape. The final line of the 'white and harrowed sky' contrasted with the 'dark water' allowed candidates to consider symbolism of light versus dark, with Sumner's 'slump' into darkness an ending without hope. Some felt a glimpse of heaven had been granted to him, only for him to surrender to the darkness. The most perceptive responses looked for, and engaged with, patterns and contrasts of tone and language across the piece as a whole. These candidates were able to evaluate where and how tension increased, and to discuss the ambiguity of the ending.

Weaker candidates on the prose retold an abridged and partial version of the story, only quoting and commenting in their response to the last bullet point on the hostility of the landscape. Stronger candidates integrated commentary on the extreme environment of the Arctic, and its resistance to human attempts to master it, throughout their answers. Many rushed to judgment about Sumner and thought that he was panicking or over-reacting, when in fact he remains composed and rational throughout, despite the desperate actions of his body. Owing to poor timing, too few dealt with the final paragraph in depth. Although many assumed Sumner had drowned, some saw 'and away' as open-ended. Some top-level responses were astounding in their analysis of sentence length and structure, sound and imagery and some even detected foreshadowing religious imagery, not least in 'harrowed' and 'ungodly'. Some pointed out that the 'creak and yawn' of the ice was Gothic in sound and imagery – perhaps 'the gates of hell opening' – and noted that Sumner's 'harrumphing', like 'clown-like and ludicrous' could show Sumner's mind amused by the undignified behaviour of his body. One candidate wrote: "He must pull himself up by his own power' indicates the lifting of something heavy and on an implicit level this might not only be Sumner himself but the great weight of his failure and the weakness of his leg". Another argued that "the juxtaposition between 'thrashes' and 'yawn' thus creates the idea that the ice is indifferent to his suffering which presents it as cruel". It is this kind of impressively sophisticated analysis of the writer's methods which leads to confident evaluation of narrative purpose and effects on the reader.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 0475/43**  
**Unseen 43**

## **Key messages**

- Most candidates read the text carefully, make good use of the bullet points and provide supporting evidence and technical analysis to support their interpretations.
- Focused comment on the effects of language is more important than simply identifying literary techniques.
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- The strongest responses consider alternative interpretations and evaluate on the basis of evidence instead of making assumptions.

## **General comments**

Examiners reported very positively on the strengths of candidates' answers to the Unseen texts in this session. Candidates clearly appreciated the choice offered to them, and there were many responses to the Prose passage even if the Poetry question remains more popular. Candidates enjoyed engaging with issues as well as language, and most responses showed understanding well beyond the literal meaning and some effective analysis of the writer's methods and consideration of the text's impact on the reader. Assessors feel the quality continues to improve, and that must in part be a result of the attention paid to these reports, and to effective teaching and preparation.

Misunderstandings can usually be avoided by careful reading of the text. The stem question and the supporting bullet points are intended to help shape candidates' responses and guide them towards valid interpretations. It is also important that candidates pay attention to the rubric which precedes the question as this clarifies any uncertainty about the nature of the situation, the characters involved and the genre of the text. Some candidates nevertheless persist, like Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, in insisting that the poem means whatever they want it to mean, pursuing symbolic readings which go against the grain of the introductory material, and the grammar of the poem's own syntax. This is where context is important in an unseen text, and in the relationship of a word or image to its place in a sentence. While candidates can construct personal readings of their own around the language of the poem, these interpretations are unlikely to show the clarity of understanding, convincing and coherent argument and sensitivity to details of language and context which will be evident in the strongest scripts.

The bullet points are a helpful guide for many candidates in structuring their responses, timing their answers and paragraphing effectively. However, it is not necessary to keep repeating the words of the bullet points: they should be a starting point, but a strong script will have its own argument and points to make.

Candidates are always keen to demonstrate their knowledge of literary terms. Terms such as hyperbole, enjambment, anaphora, caesura, metaphor and polysyndeton were used frequently, but not always with understanding or followed by a clear explanation of their effects. Nor was it always understood that prose narrative has its own technical terminology which is different from that of poetry. Some candidates focused so much on finding features, that they lost sight of the text as a whole. The single-minded focus on language features often led to a lack of attention to the question and little evidence of understanding the impact of the text as a whole. Especially for weaker candidates, literary terms are sometimes a hurdle as they focus too much on the technicality and too little on the impact. Precise naming of terms is not necessary for a higher-level mark, and candidates who identify literary techniques correctly may not actually show understanding of the text.

Long quotations are generally unnecessary. Candidates should be encouraged to quote only the parts of the text that they need as evidence. However, particularly in poetry, candidates should read the entire line that

they are quoting to ensure that the lines they quote are interpreted correctly in the context of the line, phrase and sentence in which they occur, or misinterpretations are likely. Comment on effects needs to be clearly linked to the words quoted and their place in the text: generalised comments like 'it adds emphasis/makes the reader read on/makes it dramatically effective/makes you feel you are there' are unlikely to be rewarded highly. While good word-level analysis helps candidates in the middle range of ability, the higher levels ask for a clarity of understanding which is demonstrated through a consistent interpretation and an overview of the text as a whole, which is probably obvious from the first paragraph of the answer. It is always pleasing to see structural analysis of sound, rhythm and form in responses to poetry, and an appreciation of narrative viewpoint, development and changes in focus in responses to prose.

Quality of written communication is not assessed in this paper, but strong scripts nevertheless tend to be well-written, often impressively so, and to advance a consistent interpretation and argument. They are also likely to demonstrate a degree of Keatsian negative capability, not jumping to conclusions but working out their ideas after weighing up alternative readings. Instead of imposing an interpretation, these candidates will evaluate the evidence. They will also avoid repetition and will consider the implications of their reading of the text in order to reach interesting conclusions that do not simply repeat points made in their introductions and in the body of their answers.

It is therefore clear that a good response will be a well-planned one, not necessarily a long one. The candidate will have given due time to reading both texts before making up their mind which one to write about and re-reading the text they have chosen in order to underline key words and phrases for analysis before planning their answers, keeping the bullet points and their response to them clearly in view. They will therefore have made good use of the recommended reading and planning time available. When writing, they will have developed points from their observations about language, structure and form in order to reach conclusions about the writer's purpose as well as their methods. Their argument will be clear, and they will take care to ensure that their own expression and choice of vocabulary try to match the clarity of that interpretation in order to communicate their personal and critical response effectively. Although this syllabus values personal response, at a higher level that response should also be critical, with a clear understanding of what the writer wanted to achieve and why, looking at language in terms of its emotive effect on the reader.

Teachers can usefully prepare candidates by breaking down the task into strong introductory comments, focused comment on language and interesting and evaluative conclusions.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

Based on the poem 'Bahadour' by Judith Beveridge, this question produced perhaps the highest standard of answers one can recall from recent series. Candidates responded with engagement and empathy to the situation of the young boy at the heart of the poem while generally displaying strong critical and analytical skills in a discussion as to how the writer presented the boy and his world and how she created specific effects for the reader.

The focus of the question was on how the poet memorably portrays the importance to the boy of flying his kite and what it means to him and the other boys who share his circumstances. Most candidates showed clear knowledge (AO1) that the poem is about a boy living and working in a foreign country and that the flying of his kite brings him pleasure and comfort. Strong responses displayed clear understanding (AO2) of the physical, emotional and imaginative effects that the flying of the kite has on the boy, especially in the ways that it links him back to his home and family and to the landscape of Nepal with its 'pastures of snow'. Memories or imaginings are poignantly evoked of his father calling into the mountains and his mother weeping at his departure. Particularly strong responses explored how the kite allows the boy to access his familial and cultural roots, and the sense of freedom or 'release' that it gives him and the other boys. The majority of candidates showed a clear understanding of how this freedom stands in stark contrast to the restrictive, demanding and oppressive nature of his work carrying and selling his wares which seems to consume much of his day. The short period of time towards the end of the day when he can fly his kite is special and precious ('nothing/is more important'), where he can experience simple excitement and happiness as well as a sense of communal fellowship, regaining something of the childhood that he has lost even if it is just for a fleeting 'few minutes'.

Strong scripts manifested a critical and analytical exploration of the poet's techniques and their effects (AO3), particularly the extensive use of figurative language, as in how the sun 'stamps' the boy's shadow on

the wall, or how he 'lives at the summit/of his head' or the kites as 'diamonds' in the 'thin blue air'. The implicit sense of beauty, preciousness and worth in this last image was compared in very strong answers to the extended metaphorical references to 'ticket', 'coupon', 'token', 'denominations' and so on which suggest different, more restricted or pragmatic forms of value linked to the boy's work and life within a 'hard-fisted budget'. In terms of the structural elements of the poem, many candidates commented on the intensive use of enjambment across lines and stanzas with such discussion being most effective when linked to the idea of the straining towards freedom or release alluded to above. A number of candidates pointed to the movement of the poem's lines echoing the erratic and uncertain yet flowing and barely inhibited movement of the kite up into the 'wobbly' sky.

As suggested in the General comments above, in the strongest scripts analysis of the writing goes hand in hand with a personal interpretative, evaluative response (AO4). The Descriptors for Levels 7 and 8 refer to 'clear critical understanding': essentially a grasp of what the writer is seeking to achieve and how he or she goes about achieving it. Candidates are recommended to establish what they see as the central authorial intention(s) and to explore the details of the writing in relation to this. They should use the bullet points as a guide towards a coherent, holistic response to the text and task where authorial purpose and approach are foregrounded. While most candidates read the poem as a sympathetic portrait of an individual boy and his situation, some of the most persuasive answers developed this response more deeply through a close, detailed analysis of the metaphorical references to money or its substitutes alluded to above. In doing so, they developed a powerful and, at times, moving critique of a world in which a 'deal transacted away (the boy's) childhood' and where money or the demands to make money enact an oppressive and saddening influence on a young life. The boy's capacity to shape his future is so limited by his circumstances that the poet suggests 'his life must drop like a token/into its appropriate slot'. Particularly sophisticated responses referred to implications of dehumanisation and objectification in their exploration of images such as this. In the light of such a reading, kite-flying becomes a multi-layered symbol representing, among other things, the freedom and innocence of childhood but also a celebration of the human spirit and of resilience or defiance, even. Some candidates saw in the repeated visual image of 'their/his arms up' and the words 'equivalent now only to himself', an almost heroic – if naturally unconscious – affirmation of personal identity, although others could not escape a sense of its limited and temporary nature. For most candidates, word choices such as 'surrendering' and 'yielding' suggested something positive, a giving oneself up to the moment or to the sky and a sense of cathartic release. Again, however, other readers registered slightly more negative connotations, with phrases such as 'the failing light' and 'a last spoke' carrying something of an ominous, melancholy weight. Either way, one could not fail to be impressed by the depth of imaginative engagement with the world of the text and the sensitivity of response to its language and effects.

## Question 2

The extract for this question was taken from the novel *Lila* by Marilynne Robinson. The question directed candidates to explore how the writer movingly portrays the event when Doll takes Lila, a young orphaned girl, away from the house where she has been living. Candidates generally responded extremely well to this task with very few weak answers and with most candidates showing strong imaginative engagement with the protagonists and their situation.

The great majority of candidates showed clear knowledge (AO1) that Lila is being neglected and ill-used by the people of the house and that Doll has begun to look after Lila by giving her food and drink and presents even though she herself is homeless and, we sense, desperately impoverished. One night Doll decides to take Lila away from the house even though she has no clear idea of where they might go, caring for Lila as they walk through the dark night and the rain. Most candidates showed a clear understanding (AO2) of the nature of the care which Doll gives, and that Lila appreciates the things which Doll leaves her - the little homemade doll fashioned from horse-chestnuts, in particular. There was the recognition that Doll is a strong young woman both physically and in terms of her character and temperament and candidates wrote appreciatively of how the writer suggests her big-heartedness, dogged determination and unflinching commitment to Lila. There was a clear understanding that while Doll has some doubts and misgivings and feels guilty about taking the young girl out on such a journey at night and in the pouring rain, Lila wants things to stay as they are, with her and Doll huddled together forever.

Strong responses manifested a critical exploration of the techniques employed in the writing and their effects (AO3) such as the use of an omniscient third-person narrative which allows the reader access to the inner worlds of both characters and to their thoughts and feelings. There was some appreciation shown regarding the use of both direct and indirect free speech to convey Doll's strong, lively and engagingly open personality. The ability to focus and comment sensitively or perceptively on textual details was, as always, a significant discriminator. Many candidates, for example, picked up on the use of 'they' to suggest the impersonal, detached and shadowy nature of Lila's guardians. Some commented to good effect also on the

contrast between how Lila is depicted as staying under the table most of the time and how this table is 'shoved' into a corner and the gentle tenderness of Doll's actions when she would 'kneel down' and 'spread that shawl' over the sleeping girl. These qualities were seen to be present also in the manner in which Doll steps 'carefully and quietly' when she first begins to carry Lila, how she 'brushed' the damp from the girl's cheek and her repeated 'whisper' to her for comfort and reassurance. In something of a contrast, some focused acutely on the depiction of Doll's 'big, rough hand' which 'chafed at' Lila's calves to convey both her history of hard manual work and poverty but also her robust, no-nonsense approach to taking care of the child. High-scoring responses tended to focus on the writer's use of language to evoke an inhospitable and somewhat eerie night-time setting in order to intensify the emotional impact on the reader and his or her engagement with the characters' plight. There was reference to how the night is described as 'chilly and dark', how 'The moon was gone' and that the air was 'full of tree sounds'. Sophisticated responses suggested how the simplicity of the language at these points indicated Lila's perspective on events. Such a perspective was certainly present in how Lila is portrayed as recalling that it was 'as if she were being carried along in the wind'. One candidate suggested here that the implication is conveyed of Doll as being a force of nature in her strength and implacable determination. Candidates are always recommended to focus with particular attentiveness on the endings to extracts and invariably, successful responses did just that. Much good work was achieved, for instance, in a close unpicking of the connotations of maternal intimacy and security in 'the child curled into her lap, against her breast, hearing the beat of her heart, feeling it'. The repetition of Lila's 'hoping' was seen to have a powerful emotional effect. This was also the case in the way that the parallelism of Doll as 'the loneliest woman in the world' and Lila as 'the loneliest child' encapsulates syntactically the developing depth of their mutual dependence. The final words of the passage, 'warm in the rain', were set in contrast to the earlier references to the cold.

There was a much evidence of a strong and warmly engaged personal response (AO4) to the writer's depiction of the characters, their circumstances and the developing nature of their relationship. Many candidates advanced an interpretation as to the possible motives behind Doll taking care of Lila and taking responsibility for her welfare, almost as if she were her mother or elder sister. Some speculated, not unreasonably, that perhaps Doll had suffered a childhood not dissimilar to Lila's and that perhaps it was this that explained her commitment to trying to give her a better life. A number of candidates responded with much sensitivity to the depiction of the homemade doll and what it suggested about Doll's loving, thoughtful nature. Likewise, there was some excellent work on the portrayal of Lila's response to the gift in 'the child whispered to it and slept with it under her shirt' and on how some of these details are echoed later in the passage – an example of candidates synthesising evidence from across the text to great effect. Some candidates were clearly moved by the poignancy of the comfort Lila finds here and the sense that this was perhaps the first such present she had ever received. In terms of the depiction of the outdoor scenes, most candidates naturally tended to focus on the challenging nature of the conditions, with the writer's use of pathetic fallacy to underscore a mood of foreboding much in evidence. Others, however, saw the depiction of the wind as suggesting rather a liberating sense of freedom in contrast to the oppressive nature of the house 'rank with sleep' and responded to the rain as having a similarly invigorating effect ('a tingle on the skin'). For a few, the rain had a more weighty symbolic import and was seen as possessing almost religious cleansing qualities, betokening perhaps a fresh start and new life.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/05</b> <b>Coursework</b></p>
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In successful responses, candidates:

- Show a sustained engagement with the detail of texts studied.
- Focus clearly on the task.
- Integrate relevant, concise references to support their ideas.
- Analyse in detail and sensitively the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- have only a basic understanding of the surface meaning of texts
- write at excessive length, labouring and repeating points, and losing focus on the task
- make general assertions
- list techniques without close analysis
- offer pre-learned ‘themes’ rather than personal responses to the task.

## **General comments**

There was much evidence of coursework of a high standard this session, where candidates showed a personal and evaluative engagement with texts. The strongest assignments showed that candidates had taken the opportunities offered by coursework: a close study of their texts, with evidence of research, and careful presentation of the final drafts of their assignments.

There were some instances of syllabus infringements, for example, where candidates entered assignments dealing with only one short story or with a single discrete extract from a prose or drama text. The syllabus requires that assignments refer to the whole text and, in the case of poems and short stories, at least two poems or short stories.

The most successful assignments sustained a clear focus on a carefully worded task designed to enable candidates to meet the descriptors of the highest levels. Such tasks direct candidates to address AO3 by exploring ways in which writers achieve their effects. Tasks which do not do this can have the effect of constraining candidates’ performance. Questions on whether Mrs Danvers loved Rebecca and who the real gentleman is in *Great Expectations* make fascinating topics for classroom debate but encourage candidates to see characters as real-life people rather than fictional constructs. Tasks on characters must be set which explicitly direct candidates to explore ways in which writers *portray* characters. Examples of suitable coursework tasks can be found in the 0475/0992 Coursework Training Handbook.

Some responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text, sometimes at exhaustive length, but lacked a clear focus on the task. As has been observed before, this is an unproductive approach common in many poetry assignments where candidates work through the poem offering a line-by-line commentary, without a close focus on the actual task. Centres should remind their candidates that an advantage of the Coursework component is that it encourages skills of editing and re-drafting. Candidates should be taught the skill of selecting material carefully in a way that directly addresses the task; every sentence should contribute to the unfolding argument. This will help candidates in their preparation for the set texts exam papers.

As in previous sessions, the most convincing and persuasive essays sustained a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects (AO3), relating their points to the task. By contrast, less successful assignments often commented discretely on connotations of specific words without relating them to their use in the text. This may be a consequence of candidates following an overly rigid and potentially constraining framework (such as PEE, PEEL or PETAL).

Several centres submitted empathic responses, with most providing the necessary information: the name of the character and the precise moment in the text that the interior monologue takes place. The most successful responses captured a convincingly authentic voice for the chosen character and moment. Less successful responses often showed an understanding of the character and moment but needed to capture a more clearly recognisable voice.

### Guidance for teachers

This guidance, which has appeared in previous reports, is still relevant for future coursework submissions.

Guidance on task-setting can be found in the Coursework Handbook, which stresses the importance of **(a)** wording tasks that direct candidates explicitly to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects and **(b)** avoiding command words which are insufficient such as 'Describe' and 'Explain'. Teachers within a centre should together discuss the appropriateness of proposed tasks before they are given to candidates. This enables any problems with the tasks to be resolved before it is too late.

There follows a reminder of what constitutes good practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

- Start each assignment with the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment should be clearly stated. This is important since it allows the Moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has addressed the task.
- Use focused ticking in the body of the text to indicate valid and thoughtful points, together with concise marginal and summative comments which relate to the wording of the levels descriptors. Do not simply write the supposed AOs in the margin; this is of very little benefit to any subsequent reader, as it does not reveal the *extent* to which a particular assessment objective has been addressed. Instead, more specific reference should be made to the relevant levels descriptors.
- Provide a brief explanation on the assignment or cover sheet in cases where marks are changed during internal moderation. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it enables a centre to justify its award of marks to all subsequent readers.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided:

- Excessive ticking (e.g. of every paragraph or every line).
- Hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality.
- Labelling by assessment objective.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently. The cover sheet (or individual record card) should be secured by treasury tag or staple which allows easy access to candidate work. Plastic folders are an unwelcome distraction. In well-administered centres care had been taken to:

- include all candidates on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form
- transcribe totals accurately across the various documents.

All centres are advised to include a clerical checking stage in their moderation procedures before submitting their paperwork to Cambridge. This check should be carried out by a different person from the one who completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms and Mark Sheets originally.