

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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

In successful responses, candidates:

- Address the question that has been set.
- Integrate relevant textual references to support their ideas.
- Analyse sensitively ways in which writers achieve their effects.
- Write informed personal responses to texts.
- Explore aspects of a writer's use of form.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- Work through 'themes' they have studied without a clear focus on the question.
- Have only a basic grasp of surface meanings.
- Make assertions rather analysing specific effects of the writing.
- Log features of the writing without analysing them.
- Show a limited awareness of form, sometimes using the terms 'play', 'novel' and 'poem' interchangeably.

## **General comments**

There was much evidence of assured work this session where candidates showed insight in their informed and sensitive personal responses to texts and in addressing the key words in questions. Some poetry responses were very long at the expense of prose answers, leading to an unequal performance across the paper. Some candidates scored highly for their poetry answer since they were able to refer to details in the poems printed on the paper but wrote less successfully in their prose answers where they had an insufficient range of textual references they needed for support and analysis of the writing. Several candidates directed Examiners to specific line numbers alongside the poems and printed extracts rather than using direct and focused quotations to support the points they were making.

## **Focus on the question**

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question, selecting relevant material. Some answers offered a clear understanding of the text but without achieving a clear focus. Some candidates drifted from the focus of the question by writing about themes they had revised for the exam. In answers to poetry or extract questions, many candidates simply worked through the printed text in an explanatory way without addressing the question. Candidates should be reminded that questions are not simply invitations to write all they know about a particular character, theme or setting.

## **Understanding of the text and writers' effects**

The most confident answers showed an extensive knowledge of the text and its distinctive form, with candidates integrating concise textual references to support their ideas. For poetry and extract-based questions, candidates selected relevant material printed with the question and explored it closely, and this led to careful analysis of ways in which writers achieve their effects. For general essays, the more successful responses showed evidence of candidates having learned much apt direct quotation to support their ideas, and this enabled them to analyse specific ways in which writers achieve their effects. Less successful responses lacked a sufficient range of reference and, consequently, were overly assertive or, in the least successful responses, simply descriptive.

Less successful responses to poetry merely logged features such as enjambment, caesura and ABAB rhyme schemes without close analysis of *precise* ways in which poets use these devices to create *specific* effects. Some candidates referred to 'semantic fields', listing words or phrases rather than probing the specific effects they created. Several responses focused on analysis of structure, form and language in isolation without relating this to the writer's ideas.

### **Informed personal responses**

The strongest answers explored with perception a wide range of relevant detail from the texts. Less successful responses offered personal interpretations that were overly assertive and often not adequately rooted in, nor supported by, the detail of the text. Some candidates offered their own views on topics such as love, death and grief; this is not required.

Some candidates began their answers with general introductions that did not address the question often deploying extraneous context material; in such cases, the start of an answer to the actual question was delayed until the second paragraph. Some ended their answers by repeating, sometimes at length, points already made within the main body of the answer. There is neither merit nor reward in this approach.

Several Examiners commented on handwriting that was difficult to decipher. Candidates should be reminded that legible handwriting is an important first stage in communicating with the person reading their responses.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

Largely answers maintained a focus on the striking impressions of the city created by Atwood. Most had something to say about the uniformity of the houses and the lack of normal sounds in the suburb. Almost all made at least some response to the language used and began to analyse the use of particular words such as 'pedantic', 'sanities' and 'discouraged'. Stronger answers focused on the sense of hidden imperfections – the 'bruise', the 'sickness' and the snakelike 'hose'. These candidates noted the general sense of unease created by the 'stare' of the windows. Some also went on to consider the City Planners in the final stanza and the idea of future decay. They commented in detail on some of the diction such as 'sketch', 'guessing' and 'transitory'. A few candidates saw the irony in the City Planners being connected with something natural but potentially lethal through 'blizzard' and 'bland madness of snows'. Less successful answers systematically worked through the poem without regard to the question set.

##### **Question 2**

Responses to this poem were mixed. Some candidates misunderstood the line, 'Which I for one failed not to take', and saw it as the advice not being taken, leading on to a discussion of how the persona has been cheated out of the good things in life. Many candidates presented extraneous biographical details of Hardy's life which distracted from focusing on the question. The most successful answers focused on the speaker's conversation with the World and recognised that a promise had been kept. They responded to the language; they considered the significance of the repetition and the title. Some particularly sensitive responses commented on the child's expectations of life compared to the older speaker reflecting on the 'strain and ache'. They could see the underlying suggestion of regret or perhaps satisfaction that he has allowed life to pass him by and has not allowed relationships and emotions to disturb him unduly.

##### **Question 3**

Answers which did not score highly showed a surface understanding of the fact that the speaker had lived in a number of rooms in a number of places. There was a tendency for these candidates to provide biographical details not related to the question. More developed answers recognised that the rooms are not associated with happy memories but with 'where things died' and understood the speaker's lack of hope. They considered the frequent references to death and dying and how the use of alliteration and onomatopoeia enhanced the feeling of melancholy. Particular phrases were commented upon such as 'ceaseless maddening sound' and the final line 'Out there in the sun-in the rain'.

#### Question 4

Very few candidates answered this question. Those who did referred to the picture postcard description in the first stanzas but tended not to develop beyond this general recognition of the landscape. There was little response to the more negative ideas in the later stanzas or of the speaker's depressive state of mind.

#### Question 5

Most candidates showed at least some understanding that this was a good-humoured football game where the main competition was the weather rather than the opposing team. They were able to make some reference to the language used by Hughes, such as the colourful 'bunting' and 'the merry coloured men'. They noted the power and sound created through the repetition of 'bounced'. Stronger answers provided a more detailed analysis of the language considering 'rubbery', 'spouted' and 'steel press'. These answers recognised the difficulties that the men face from the apocalyptic weather and how overcoming that challenge, together with their love of the game, united them even more to achieve the admiration of nature, as illustrated in the final lines. The strongest answers provided developed interpretations for these lines seeing the contrast between the joyful ideas associated with 'golden' and the horrifying images prompted by the reference to 'holocaust'.

#### Question 6

Candidates largely understood that Hughes is remembering his mother and imagining her telling her sister about her life and describing the activities of the boys. Some of the imagery such as the references to the 'Northern Lights', 'Madonna-like' and 'Red Indian hair' were considered but not in great detail. Many candidates digressed to relate biographical information about Ted Hughes rather than maintaining their focus on the question.

#### Section B

#### Question 7

Mostly candidates focused on how this was such a vivid moment in the novel. They could describe the numerous activities, the sounds and colours presented. Many referred to the scene being likened to a 'vibrant painting'. Stronger answers considered the language used in much greater detail. These answers also tended to consider the effect of the scene on Kambili and her personal growth. They considered the contrast between this pulsating scene and her life at home. They referenced Papa's view of these activities as being 'pagan masquerades' and contrasted that with Papa-Nnukwu's immense pride in the occasion.

#### Question 8

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 9

Few candidates understood that the purpose of Pip's visit was to ask Biddy to marry him and considered the extract at face value. They commented on how pleased Joe and Biddy were to see Pip on their special day and how Joe and Biddy were happy to forgive Pip for his previous behaviour. More successful answers considered the extract within the context of the whole novel. They recognised Joe's unwavering faith in Pip and his generosity to him. They commented on the character development in Pip, recognising his former poor behaviour and his now being able to ask humbly for forgiveness. The issues of what constitutes a 'real' gentleman and of what wealth can do to a person were considered. These candidates also explored Dickens's use of language particularly in relation to Joe and Biddy's feelings: 'proud', 'melted' and 'quivering lip'.

#### Question 10

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 11

Most answers recognised the context of the extract, that the couple were driving home from the visit to Dr Baker and that Rebecca's cancer diagnosis would support the theory of Rebecca's suicide allowing them to have a happy future; they established the contrast between the hopes and the reality as the start of the

drama. They then related the significance of the dream at the beginning of the novel and the forebodings that it brought to the dream in this extract. This dream reveals the power the deceased Rebecca still has over the narrator invading her life through the details of handwriting and hair brushing. The strongest answers paid attention to the details of the language, for example, the onomatopoeic 'chattering', used to show the physical coldness of the narrator. The tension built up through the dialogue with the innocent statements regarding the dawn breaking and the Northern Lights and then Max's succinct, 'That's Manderley'. They saw a further contrast in the increase in pace in the extract as Max drove 'faster, much faster' to the previous slow dialogue and before that the account of the dream.

### Question 12

Whilst most candidates were able to find general instances of the narrator's fear of Mrs Danvers, they tended not to be able to substantiate their ideas fully. Many candidates provided character studies of Mrs Danvers rather than focusing on the narrator's fear of her. The more successful answers provided clear examples of instances that illustrated the narrator's fear such as at the initial first meeting, the incident of the broken cupid, the ball and when she tries to force the narrator to jump from the window and commit suicide. These responses considered the deathly imagery used to describe Mrs Danvers and the apologetic and subservient tone that the narrator frequently adopts with Mrs Danvers.

### Question 13

Most candidates recognised the importance of this moment showing some sense of the context of the extract within the whole novel. Many had something to say about elements of the language and in particular the use of 'stranger' to describe his father. The most successful answers commented on the build-up to the revelation, the pathetic fallacy of the weather, the quiet atmosphere in the car in contrast to previous journeys and the body language of both characters. They were able to explore the impact on Gogol of the significance of his name's importance. They considered the descriptions of Gogol's changing emotions, 'puzzled', 'stunned', 'accusing', 'struggling' and 'ashamed', as well as considering the effect of the final line.

### Question 14

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

### Question 15

Many answers seemed unaware of the context of the extract and showed some uncertainty of who the characters were. Some saw Dora Lumley as an innocent victim with Dianne de Poitiers being a cruel bully. Some candidates wrote about the dangers of colonialism, though not always with relevant substantiation. Stronger answers focused on how Lindsay made this such a disturbing moment. They knew the context that the girls are in a near hysterical state and have attempted to attack Irma Leopold. Dora Lumley failed to go to the Head to seek help and now wants to go to her to cause trouble. They considered the characterisation of Dora Lumley and Dianne de Poitiers and how contrast between the two women was used to enhance this. They commented in some detail on the language used by Lindsay such as the comparison of Dora Lumley to a toad and pejorative descriptions such as 'crouching position' and 'fallen arches'. Dianne de Poitiers's control of the dialogue was noted with her complete reduction of Dora Lumley to a 'trembling and marble white' figure. The strongest answers also considered the fate of Sara with some seeing it a sign of what was later to befall her. They noted how her being left in such a state was an oversight because of the stress of Dora Lumley's 'unpleasant afternoon' and commented on the irony inherent in that phrase.

### Question 16

Very few candidates answered this question. Those that did tended to provide a character study of Miranda with general references to the novel. Overall, much more detailed reference was needed and a more explicit focus on the key words 'vivid impressions'.

### Question 17

Pi's loneliness on arriving on land after the long ordeal at sea and being abandoned by Richard Parker was generally recognised. Stronger answers were able to describe in more detail Pi's feelings about Richard Parker's abrupt departure and its effect on Pi. The strongest answers recognised Pi's mixed feelings about reaching safety and his fear of leaving the boat with the irony of his fear of drowning in 'two feet of water' after being so long at sea. They considered Pi's view that Richard Parker's departure meant that he was orphaned yet again as well as the anguish Pi suffered in not being recognised by Richard Parker and

receiving an official goodbye, which would provide some kind of closure. The significance of religion to Pi was also considered as was the idea that Richard Parker represented Pi's animal instinct and was now no longer necessary. The effects used by Martel were explored such as Pi's monologue and the use of particular words and phrases such as 'my own species'.

#### Question 18

The few candidates who attempted to answer this question mostly used the extract from **Question 17**. This narrow scope of reference limited their responses. Candidates tended to describe Richard Parker's physical weakness after being so long at sea. Support was largely therefore from the first paragraph of the extract and in particular the phrase, 'his paws gouging the wet sand'. It was thus not possible to provide a detailed and developed response to the question.

#### Question 19

There were several reasonably developed responses to this question. Candidates were aware of the context and the ambiguity of specific news about the Martians and how the lack of clarity about the invaders created fear. The terror of the people who could hear but not see the battle was noted alongside the sheer speed and destructiveness of the Martians with the Heat-Ray. In terms of effects, candidates addressed the speed of the narrative and the dialogue together with the description of the sounds or the lack of them; they understood how these factors create tension, contributing to making this such a powerful moment.

#### Question 20

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 21

There were some very strong answers which were detailed, developed and focused on the question. These saw that the humour arose from several angles. The audacity of Sharma giving Miss Das, his superior, advice on marriage is then undercut when he discovers that she is already married. His boldness in asking to share his poetry in the Firm's time when he then concedes in discussing the poetry in his own time. His self-righteous dialogue with his fellow 'skiver' Gupta was also noted, as was the sense that he is now finally going to commit himself to hard work for the final half hour of the working day only to discover that he is preparing not to work but to write a new poem. Many answers wrote about how the story was about a change in Sharma; others wrote about gender roles or changing traditions but needed to tailor their material to the question's key word 'amusing'.

#### Question 22

The few responses seen showed some understanding of the story *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers* and its characters. Better answers focused on the relationship between father and daughter and their failure to communicate. More precise textual details were needed about the characters and their actions to understand why sympathy might be felt. Response to effects and language needed development.

There were also only a few responses to the other story indicated in the question, *The Tower*. These showed general knowledge of the story and Caroline's position. Some wrote in detail about gender roles and misogyny but without relating it to specific details in the story. Several candidates were able to comment on the tension created in climbing the tower and its effect on Caroline. Although some responses provided accurate and appropriate details, many candidates provided only general references to the story which needed greater development. More textual detail was also needed to support comments on ways in which the writer achieves her effects.

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### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

Most candidates acknowledged how deeply moving the poem is by discussing the father's inability to accept his wife's death, how his everyday life/routine still revolves around her and how the speaker's incredulity towards his father's grief is mirrored by his own actions in the final stanza. The most successful responses explored details that create pathos, looking at the possible implications of love being 'raw' and the reference to 'warmth'. Several explored the connotations of 'disconnected' and the title of the poem. Some wrote that it represented the distance between father and son, caused by their differing responses to the mother's death, and some who focused on the image of the disconnected phone, pointed to the distance between life and death. Some responses commented on societal expectations about men dealing with grief, though often in an overly assertive way. Less successful answers showed an understanding of the pain of grief but tended to summarise or re-tell the content of the poem. Many of the less successful responses did not look at specific ways in which language choices create effects.

##### **Question 2**

Many candidates explored both amusing and serious elements of the poem and focused consistently on the question. More successful responses argued that Wright treats serious subjects in a comic manner. For example, the phrase in parenthesis ('which luckily later caught him on his way') imparts the dramatic rescue almost as a casual afterthought; and the description of the second son 'balanced on a small ice-floe' presents a comical picture of a small child perhaps perceiving his escapade as a game, oblivious to the threat. The strongest responses reflected on the idea of an attitude as a gift and grasped the humour of the unsuitably petticoat-clad daughter saving her brother by sticking out 'an alpenstock' and of the mother maintaining a calm attitude as she sketches the scene. The reference to 'petticoats' sometimes led to generalised comment about the subjugation of women 'in those days'. Less successful responses missed the writer's use of humour and irony and needed a more confident grasp of the detail of the poem.

##### **Question 3**

In most answers there was an understanding of the speaker's lamenting of his unrequited and lost love, his having no remedy but to continue his life alone. Only the most assured answers were able to explore the implications of the object of the speaker's desire being cast as cruel and heartless for not returning his affection. The speaker was variously judged to be sympathetic, self-pitying and obsessive. One candidate wrote that the poem expresses an inherently male perspective and experience. The strongest responses integrated well-selected textual reference to support their interpretations and analysed closely ways in which Swinburne achieves his effects. Less successful responses worked their way through the poem in a narrative

fashion without addressing the key words ‘memorably convey’. There were many references to rhyme schemes that lacked specific, convincing detail to support the general points made.

#### Question 4

Most candidates were able to discuss the dream as a metaphor for the speaker’s troubled thoughts and feelings, and most were able to relate this to the final stanza and his sense of abandonment. Most responses focused on the impressions of the army, the effects of the dream on the speaker, and the seemingly relentless nature of the dream. Most interpreted the army as an extended metaphor rather than a literal invasion. Many candidates reflected on the surreal nature of the lurid green hair, though some commented unproductively in general terms on the colour being symbolic of youth and nature. Less successful responses were narrative or overly assertive, sometimes including pre-learned generalised comment on structure and form, without either reference to specific detail in the poem or to the specific requirements of the question.

#### Question 5

Successful responses commented on the powerful depiction of the man’s strength in handling a heavy and unwieldy animal, his professionalism and expertise (‘suddenly savage, suddenly gentle’), and his absorption in the task. There was much perceptive analysis of the impact of visual imagery and of the hyphenated words (such as ‘flame-crimson’). The strongest responses addressed consistently the key words ‘powerfully portray’; some responses narrowed the focus to the power of the sheep-shearer. Less successful responses worked through the poem adopting a narrative or overly assertive approach. A few candidates misread the reference to ‘collier’ and wrote instead about ‘colliers’.

#### Question 6

The most convincing responses focused on the speaker’s ‘thoughts and feelings’, and how Hughes makes them ‘so disturbing’. They explored the speaker’s bitterness towards the person being addressed and his criticism of that person’s jealousy towards the person referred to as ‘she’ throughout the poem. In these successful responses, there was a sustained critical analysis of the speaker’s relentlessly harsh tone and the significance of the imagery relating to ‘vacuum’ and ‘crossed-out page’. Stronger responses focused on specific details in the poem and tailored their material to the key words of the question. Less successful responses focused on context rather than exploring the details of the text itself, with general comments about Sylvia Plath and Assia Wevill and assertions about Hughes’ attitude towards them and women in general, with little supporting reference from the poem.

### Section B

#### Question 7

Most answers showed at least some understanding of the character, a friendly and well-liked priest, and most candidates commented on how at home he is with the family, engaging with the individual interests of the children. Many answers explored the descriptions of the ‘whiff of an earthy cologne’ and the ‘boyish man’ and how Adichie uses them to present his character. The more successful responses were able to place this moment in the wider context of the novel and to consider the significance of this moment which introduces Father Amadi to readers. These responses understood that impressions of the character are gleaned from Kambili’s perspective. Candidates compared the different attitudes towards religion held by this young priest and older characters such as Papa Eugene and Father Benedict. Less successful responses drifted too far from the question, working through the extract commenting on Kambili’s thoughts and feelings rather than tailoring their material to the demands of the question.

#### Question 8

Most candidates appreciated Jaja’s courage and growing defiance towards his father and the constraints of family life: some noted the significance of the visit to Nsukka and Auntie Ifeoma’s encouragement to Jaja to resemble his namesake. There were some sensitive responses to this question, offering a wide coverage of suitable references and a perceptive understanding of the character. The strongest responses drew upon a comprehensive range of references, including much direct quotation, which allowed candidates to analyse closely aspects of Adichie’s writing and to give convincing reasons for admiring Jaja. In responses with an insufficiently wide range of reference, candidates were overly dependent on assertion. The least successful responses included summaries of key moments in a descriptive way, lacking specific textual detail for support.



### Question 9

Many answers showed an understanding of the dramatic nature of Magwitch's slow revelation of his knowledge of Pip's circumstances. The more successful responses explored the suddenness of Pip's realisation ('the truth...came flashing on me') and the consequences as Pip sees them ('disappointments, dangers, disgraces'). The strongest responses wrote sensitively about this encounter between Pip and Magwitch and made judicious links to the rest of the novel to illuminate the points they made about this 'dramatic and significant moment in the novel'. They analysed closely ways in which Dickens conveys Magwitch's sense of theatre and his enjoyment in his revelation, in contrast to Pip's 'abhorrence'. Pip's stunned silence and inarticulacy, enabling Magwitch to dominate the encounter, were also discussed. Less successful responses worked though the extract describing the encounter without addressing the key words of the question.

### Question 10

Many responses included references to Estella's appalling treatment of Pip during his first visit to Satis House, her indoctrination by Miss Havisham, her marriage to Drummle, his abusive treatment of her, and her final conversation with Pip. There was a general understanding that Estella is a direct result of what Miss Havisham makes her, as a device to exact revenge on men. Stronger responses saw Miss Havisham's stealing her heart and putting ice in its place as an admission that it is taken from Estella without her consent, her repentance a clear indication of sins against Estella. Less successful responses offered character sketches without exploring Dickens's presentation of the character and reasons for sympathy (or otherwise). These general responses often lacked relevant support and did not consider the complexities of the character's portrayal.

### Question 11

Most candidates understood the context of the moment within the wider novel: the boat in which Rebecca died has been discovered and both Maxim and the narrator have no idea about what is going to happen next. The more successful responses focused on the change in power dynamics of the relationship between the narrator and Maxim, often describing this as a role reversal, with Maxim now seeming uncertain and the narrator forceful and firm. The strongest responses addressed the key word 'tense', exploring the nature of silence within this extract and how it contributes to the tension. There was also analysis of the tension created by Rebecca's haunting presence and its enormous impact on Maxim and by what some regarded as a breakdown in trust between narrator and reader, citing what they regarded as the immorality of the narrator's lack of concern about the murder itself. Less successful responses made general observations about 'gothic', wrote a narrative account of the extract without addressing the question or were not sure about which character is speaking.

### Question 12

In most responses, there was an understanding of key character traits of Rebecca, with references to her affairs, her cruelty, her manipulation of others and her firm hold over Manderley. Only the strongest responses explored du Maurier's use of form, notably the use of a retrospective first person narrator whose reliability might be questioned as someone biased and blinded by love for Maxim. One candidate wrote that the narrator and Maxim have a vested interest in depicting Rebecca as a villain. Less successful responses offered straightforward comments in basic character sketches. Those who restricted their references to the extract printed in **Question 11** adopted a self-limiting approach because of the narrow scope of their answers.

### Question 13

Most responses revealed an understanding of Gogol's thought and feelings as depicted in the extract, and many candidates were able to make relevant links to other parts of the novel. They commented on Gogol's eagerness to change his name, the urge to tell strangers he is now 'Nikhil' and his guilt that he is 'overstepping' his parents. The more successful responses sustained a clear focus on the question and selected relevant material for analysis of Lahiri's writing, exploring the impact of the event being described as 'unmomentous'. Less successful responses worked through the extract, tracing Gogol's thoughts and feelings, often in a descriptive rather than analytical way, without addressing the key words 'strikingly convey'.

#### Question 14

Most candidates understood key details about the marriage between Ashoke and Ashima, for example, the circumstances leading up to their arranged marriage, their support for each other, her dependence on him and the impact on her of Ashoke's death. The more successful responses commented on their determination keep their Bengali heritage alive, the difficulties of their early life in America and the impact on their marriage when Ashoke works away from home. The strongest answers used a wide range of direct quotation both to support their ideas and to analyse features of the writing. Less successful responses were overly dependent on narrative and assertion, often within a narrow scope of reference.

#### Question 15

In many responses, there was an awareness of the wider context, that the girls are taking revenge on Irma, who is prettier and richer than they are. More successful responses explored Lindsay's presentation of the girls' hysteria, uncontrollable and dangerous, and Dianne's sudden power and unexpected physical strength in coming to the rescue of Irma. Her slap on Edith's cheek is all that can quell the hysteria. The strongest responses explored the exaggerated initial description of the scene to the French Revolution and the animalistic and grotesque descriptions of the girls and the dramatic impact of the slap across Edith's cheek. Less successful responses worked through the extract, explaining what is happening, sometimes with an imperfect understanding of who the characters are and which character is speaking.

#### Question 16

Of the few answers seen, the strongest ones picked up on class differences, the nature of masculinity and friendship, the humour and Albert's significance within the plot. Candidates focused on his relationships with Mike and Irma and on the value placed on him by the Colonel. They commented on his difficult start in life and his modestly accepting the cheque from the Leopold family and spending the money wisely. The least successful responses had an insufficient range of references to be able respond adequately to ways in which Lindsay makes him such a memorable character.

#### Question 17

The deterioration of Pi and Richard Parker and the fear of going blind after all their other trials were understood by most candidates. Pi's caring nature, respect for animals and selflessness were mentioned. Most found particularly moving Pi's acceptance of death as inevitable. The more successful responses explored the impact of Pi's moving address to his family and statement to God, the depiction of his inner struggles with external forces, and the way in which Martel conveys this new sense of hopelessness. Only a few answers mentioned the dramatic nature of the cliff-hanger at the end of the extract. The least successful responses worked through the extract re-telling its content without exploring specific ways in which Martel makes the moment 'both moving and dramatic'.

#### Question 18

Of the few answers seen, the strongest ones focused on Pi's resilience, optimism and empathy conveyed effectively through first person narrative voice. These answers explored his integrity towards three religions, the effects of losing family, his affection for Richard Parker and his utter heroism for surviving so long on the lifeboat. Other responses lacked a sufficient range of relevant references with which to address the question.

#### Question 19

Most candidates showed at least some understanding of the extract and its position within the wider novel. The more successful responses used relevant supporting reference to comment on the sense of anarchy, danger, panic and, ultimately, societal collapse. There was perceptive analysis of hysterical humans fighting like animals and the descent into savagery, even in a supposedly civilised country. There was comment on how shocking it is that those who should be protecting the people are now being violent towards them. In the strongest responses, candidates commented on the implications in the collapse of transport and infrastructure and specific ways in which Wells captures the chaos and panic. Some candidates attempted to draw a parallel between the Martian invasion and British colonial oppression in other lands, though this was often overly assertive and led to an inconsistent focus on the question. Less successful responses re-told the events in the extract without focusing on the ways in which Wells 'powerfully conveys panic'. Other responses focused on only a narrow section of the extract.

### Question 20

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 21

Many answers focused on the mystery of Dr Heidegger, his highly suspicious past and the curious nature of the experiment he proposes. The more successful responses explored the portrayal of his friends: their age, disreputableness and rumours surrounding them. These responses were alert to Hawthorne's use of irony. They analysed the presentation of the setting, with references to the skeleton rattling in its closet, the painting of his fiancée and the implications about magic and the supernatural. The strongest responses sustained a focus on the key words 'intriguing opening'. Less successful responses offered a narrative rather than analytical response to the question, working their way through the extract without an effective selection of appropriate material. Some labelled aspects of the extract as 'gothic' without developing their points or making them relevant to the question.

### Question 22

Of the few answers seen, the stronger ones showed understanding of the children's lack of affection for their mother and of the purely practical and mercenary nature of the arrangement they propose for her future. The strongest responses explored the detached tone of the discussions, the depiction of the widow's forcefulness and the themes of greed and family values. Stereotypes associated with the word 'widow' were considered alongside the subversion of those stereotypes within the story. Less successful responses retold some events from the story with a limited range of references.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/13</b> <b>Poetry and Prose</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

In successful responses, candidates:

- address the question that has been set
- integrate relevant textual references to support their ideas
- analyse sensitively ways in which writers achieve their effects
- write informed personal responses to texts
- explore aspects of a writer's use of form.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- work through 'themes' they have studied without a clear focus on the question
- have only a basic grasp of surface meanings
- make assertions rather analysing specific effects of the writing
- log features of the writing without analysing them
- show a limited awareness of form, sometimes using the terms 'play', 'novel' and 'poem' interchangeably.

## **General comments**

There was much evidence of assured work this session where candidates showed insight in their informed and sensitive personal responses to texts and in addressing the key words in questions. Some poetry responses were very long at the expense of prose answers, leading to an unequal performance across the paper. Some candidates scored highly for their poetry answer since they were able to refer to details in the poems printed on the paper but wrote less successfully in their prose answers where they had an insufficient range of textual references they needed for support and analysis of the writing. Several candidates directed Examiners to specific line numbers alongside the poems and printed extracts rather than using direct and focused quotations to support the points they were making.

## **Focus on the question**

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question, selecting relevant material. Some answers offered a clear understanding of the text but without achieving a clear focus. Some candidates drifted from the focus of the question by writing about themes they had revised for the exam. In answers to poetry or extract questions, many candidates simply worked through the printed text in an explanatory way without addressing the question. Candidates should be reminded that questions are not simply invitations to write all they know about a particular character, theme or setting.

## **Understanding of the text and writers' effects**

The most confident answers showed an extensive knowledge of the text and its distinctive form, with candidates integrating concise textual references to support their ideas. For poetry and extract-based questions, candidates selected relevant material printed with the question and explored it closely, and this led to careful analysis of ways in which writers achieve their effects. For general essays, the more successful responses showed evidence of candidates having learned much apt direct quotation to support their ideas, and this enabled them to analyse specific ways in which writers achieve their effects. Less successful responses lacked a sufficient range of reference and, consequently, were overly assertive or, in the least successful responses, simply descriptive.

Less successful responses to poetry merely logged features such as enjambment, caesura and ABAB rhyme schemes without close analysis of *precise* ways in which poets use these devices to create *specific* effects. Some candidates referred to 'semantic fields', listing words or phrases rather than probing the specific effects they created. Several responses focused on analysis of structure, form and language in isolation without relating this to the writer's ideas.

### **Informed personal responses**

The strongest answers explored with perception a wide range of relevant detail from the texts. Less successful responses offered personal interpretations that were overly assertive and often not adequately rooted in, nor supported by, the detail of the text. Some candidates offered their own views on topics such as love, death and grief; this is not required.

Some candidates began their answers with general introductions that did not address the question often deploying extraneous context material; in such cases, the start of an answer to the actual question was delayed until the second paragraph. Some ended their answers by repeating, sometimes at length, points already made within the main body of the answer. There is neither merit nor reward in this approach.

Several Examiners commented on handwriting that was difficult to decipher. Candidates should be reminded that legible handwriting is an important first stage in communicating with the person reading their responses.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

Most candidates understood the poem's main message that power is transient and some recognised that Shelley is praising art's ability to preserve the past. The most successful responses addressed the question directly and considered how the writer's choices linked to the question. Successful candidates often recognised Shelley's use of biblical allusion seen in the quotation, 'King of Kings,' and commented on the arrogance of Ozymandias as he aligned himself to God or Jesus. Stronger answers also explored the development of the story from the different perspectives – the traveller, Ozymandias and the speaker. Less effective answers identified writing techniques such as the alliteration of 'cold command' without considering what impact this had. Some candidates had learnt ideas about the power of art but could not apply them clearly. A few candidates misinterpreted the line 'The hand that fed them.' They took a more literal approach and commented on someone being fed, without looking beyond the surface meaning. They often missed the religious nuances and the wider implications of Shelley's poem.

##### **Question 2**

Most candidates understood the question and made some comments on why the poem was disturbing. They were able to engage with the idea of the writer's block and how it was affecting the narrator. The most convincing responses distinguished between the anxiety of the speaker and the hope brought by his wife, linking both parts of the poem to how it was disturbing. They engaged with the imagery such as the tortoise and what this suggested about the burden he was to his wife or the metaphor of the child within. Less successful answers picked out ideas without linking to the question, for example they acknowledged the imagery of the wife as a 'poor turtle' but did not say why this was disturbing. Some of these responses were narrative in their approach and a few candidates confused this poem with Thom Gunn's *The Man with Night Sweats*. Some of the autobiographical information, particularly about HIV, was not always useful in extending their analysis of the poem and a few responses spent too much time discussing mental health issues. There were some misinterpretations, such as the child died literally.

##### **Question 3**

The most successful answers understood that the speaker is dying and addressing her husband as she approaches her death. They identified a range of the speaker's thoughts and feelings about death, such as relief, love and concern for her husband as she leaves him, and her eternal perspective. These understood that death was a welcome relief and commented on death as a friend who 'woos' her with a 'cheerful grace'. Their response to writing effects included analysis of the imagery surrounding death and the speaker's loving address to her husband. Less successful answers were more simplistic in their interpretation of feelings. They sometimes confused who she was speaking to or why – some confused the descriptions of death with

the husband. Comments on the rhyme and form were often not relevant or lacked explanation. Some personal responses reflected that the speaker's attitude to death was unusual, strange or 'weird'. In many of these responses, what seemed to be lacking was an understanding of the religious aspects of the poem and what this might have meant to the speaker as she approaches her death.

#### Question 4

Most candidates grasped the central concept in the poem that there is no end to the challenges of study and that the attainment of knowledge is a life-long pursuit. The most successful answers identified the parallel between mental and physical labour and had a clear understanding of the various layers of the poem. These answers effectively explored the images of nature, and often linked the 'heights of Arts', with the 'towering Alps'. Less successful candidates tended to simply list poetic devices without explaining how they contribute to making Pope's ideas memorable.

#### Question 5

Most answers understood the violence of nature in the poem and noted its effects on the house, the landscape and 'each other'. The strongest answers explored language effects in detail, picking up on details such as the onomatopoeia, plosive sounds, personification and vivid physical references such as 'the woods crashing through darkness', or the impact of the wind that 'dented the balls of my eyes'. Some candidates reflected on the passivity of the human presence in the poem as opposed to the dynamism of nature. Many stronger answers commented on what they regarded as the apocalyptic tone in the last stanza. Many candidates linked the violence of nature to the toxic relationship between Hughes and Sylvia Plath, although there is only implicit reference to this in the last verse. Some less successful answers were distracted with biographical information about Hughes and his relationship or did not respond to the question. Some of these responses lacked a cohesive argument, instead offering a series of disconnected observations about the poem's language and imagery.

#### Question 6

Most candidates engaged to some extent with the key word, 'mysterious', and grasped the 'other worldliness' of the persona's experience. Many were able to identify some of the ethereal imagery such as the 'blue-dark deer' or the 'curtain blown aside for a moment'. The most successful answers explored effectively the poet's use of ambiguous language and shifting perspectives to create uncertainty. Some noted how Hughes blurs the line between reality and imagination, contributing to the poem's mysterious atmosphere. Less successful answers picked up on the magical experience but needed to emphasize the chasm existing between the worlds of humanity and nature and to delve more deeply into how specific techniques create mystery. Some candidates struggled to move beyond surface-level observations about the poem's content.

A few candidates mistakenly connected 'the password' with the internet or confused the reference to 'boil of big flakes' with a hot sunny day.

### Section B

#### Question 7

Nearly all answers recognised the joyful, positive qualities of Auntie Ifeoma's bubbly personality and many candidates were able to confidently compare her to Papa's legalistic, strict approach to life or Beatrice's quiet, repressed personality. Many candidates showed clear knowledge of the entire novel and made relevant links to the situations outside of the extract. Stronger answers commented on her importance in the novel and what her legacy would be to Kambili. Some discussed the context of Christianity and colonialism and how Auntie Ifeoma embraces her cultural heritage. Some candidates wrote insightfully about the symbol of the orange tree and the use of setting. Less effective answers did not focus on the question. They spent too much time writing about Auntie Ifeoma in the rest of the novel or comparing her to Papa and then writing at length about Papa. Some commented on her character but not how the writer's choices worked to show these ideas. A few wrote too much on the effects of colonialism or the plight of Nigerian women in a patriarchal society without linking their ideas to the question or relevant details from the text.

#### Question 8

As with **Question 7**, it was clear that candidates know this text well and there were some strong comparisons between Eugene's public face of charity and decency, and his chilling control in the home. The most convincing answers selected relevant situations from the novel to present an argument, for example,

his cruelty and abuse in the home, the family's reaction to his control or Kambili's willingness to burn her mouth on the hot tea to please him. They also understood that part of Eugene's adherence to colonial power and Christian doctrine meant that he truly thought he was doing the right thing. Successful answers included direct quotations from the text and considered some of the writing effects such as the setting or his use of English and avoidance of Igbo. Less successful answers provided a summary of events or a list of reasons why he was a 'bad man', with little evaluation or supporting detail from the text.

#### **Question 9**

Most candidates found relevant points from the passage which responded to 'disturbing impressions' of Miss Havisham. They noted features such as her faded appearance, the abandoned wedding preparations and clocks that have stopped at the same time. Some of the more successful answers commented on how Miss Havisham, despite her fragile state, usurped a sense of authority over Pip, a member of the lower class. They understood the impossibility for Pip to 'play' in the frightening and strange environment. Stronger answers appreciated how Dickens creates disturbing effects in the extract through the detailed descriptions of the surroundings and the comparison of Miss Havisham to a 'ghastly waxwork' or skeleton. Less successful answers provided a general summary of the character and some added information about Miss Havisham from the rest of the novel, without linking to the extract.

#### **Question 10**

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

#### **Question 11**

Most candidates understood how the writer creates a sense of drama in this moment of the text. They were able to show this through the revelation of Rebecca's murder and the relationship between the characters. Many candidates showed sound understanding of the extract's context within the wider novel. Strong answers addressed the power dynamics between Max and the narrator and how these dynamics shift in this scene. Candidates noted the growing maturity of the narrator. Successful answers appreciated writing features that are used to create tension such as the use of Gothic imagery, the emotional tone and the narrator's questions. Less effective answers wrote about the characters of the narrator and Maxim without considering the moment itself. They often spent too much time considering the consequences of the party and the narrator wearing the dress. Many ran out of time and did not get to considering the dramatic reveal of Rebecca's death. They considered the plot but no other elements.

#### **Question 12**

There were too few responses for meaningful comment.

#### **Question 13**

Most candidates recognised the key differences between Ashoke and Ashima. Many identified with Ashima's negative experience and provided strong, sympathetic personal responses. The strongest answers moved beyond surface understanding and discussed with sensitivity the behaviours and reactions of Ashima and Ashoke to the various activities mentioned in the extract. These answers effectively balanced textual analysis with insightful personal responses, offering thoughtful interpretations of the characters' motivations and the significance of their differences. Strong answers also explored Lahiri's use of descriptive language, repetition and internal monologue to reveal the characters' contrasting thoughts and emotions. Some drew connections between the text and broader themes of immigration and cultural identity. Less successful answers lacked detailed textual evidence to support their points, relying instead on general observations about the characters. Many of these also struggled to move beyond surface-level observations to offer meaningful personal interpretations.

#### **Question 14**

The few candidates who chose this question showed knowledge and understanding of Moushumi's character and offered some points which responded to the question. Successful answers considered her background and the experiences that influenced her actions such as her love of Paris, her painful first engagement, or her affair with Dimitri. These answers explored the complexity of her character, acknowledging both sympathetic and unsympathetic aspects such as her deceit, and evaluated to what extent they could feel sympathy for Moushumi. They considered the cultural pressures she faces. Less successful responses often

provided a list of events or situations concerning Moushumi without explaining their significance. Some did not consider any reason for her actions and simply sympathised with her with no basis for their feeling.

#### Question 15

Most candidates understood some of Albert's qualities such as his decisiveness, his selflessness, his concern for Mike, or his quick response to search for him despite his exhaustion. The most successful answers provided a deeper analysis of Albert's relationship with Mike and the unexpected dynamic between them. A few reflected on the socioeconomic factors within the novel to deepen their analysis of Albert, with supporting textual references. These answers explored the language in the passage, for example, the thinking process Albert went through on his bed, asking himself numerous questions to find answers. Less successful answers paraphrased Albert's actions without commenting on his character or they missed more subtle details about him such as his gentleness with Mike, or his sense of responsibility. Many of these did not analyse Lindsay's writing techniques, focusing solely on plot summary. A few did not address the question and merely provided a summary of the actions on the extract.

#### Question 16

There were only a few responses to this question, but most of these came from candidates who knew the text well and had a clear understanding of characters and their motivations. Irma's character was well represented with supporting textual details and examples, and candidates offered personal interpretations of her actions. Candidates commented on aspects such as her wealthy background, her appearance, or the attack by the girls in the gym.

#### Question 17

The strongest responses to this question understood the key word, 'entertaining', and focused on the humour and irony in the extract, such as the absurdity of Pi's unusual teenage rebellion, the reversal of roles within the family or the dramatic tension that builds as the holy men approach. They appreciated Martel's clever use of language, such as the reference to Pi's father's business/*busyness* or the amusing descriptions of Pi's family's attitudes on religion. Some of the stronger answers provided thoughtful reflections on how this moment relates to real-world issues of personal identity. Less successful answers struggled with the concept of 'entertaining'. Some of these candidates merely summarised the key moments and did not comment on the subtle linguistic nuances or they misinterpreted the tone of the scene. Some offered long quotations without adequate exploration, and a few provided generic responses that could apply to any scene in the novel, rather than addressing the specifics of this moment.

#### Question 18

Of the few who answered this question, most picked up on the shift in the relationship between Pi and Richard Parker as the novel progresses and were able to pinpoint the changes in Pi's feelings towards the tiger. They described relevant situations or scenes to illustrate this, such as Pi's background and knowledge of animals, his initial fears or his deep desire to save and care for Richard Parker. The strongest answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the complex relationship between Pi and Richard Parker and explored psychological aspects such as Pi's fear, dependence, and companionship. They included a range of relevant, memorised quotations. Some strong answers also discussed how Pi's changing feelings towards Richard Parker reflect his own personal growth and survival journey and offered insightful interpretations of the symbolic significance of Richard Parker in Pi's journey. Less successful candidates focused too much on plot summary rather than analysis of Pi's changing feelings or did not show the progression in Pi's feelings. Some focused solely on Pi's fear of Richard Parker without exploring other emotions.

#### Question 19

Most candidates were able to identify the language devices which develop tension, such as foreshadowing, similes, anthropomorphism. Phrases such as 'terror...petrified.... horror...greyish...saliva' captured the imagination of many candidates. The most convincing answers commented on deeper implications such as the sense of chaos, the curiosity of the narrator or the shock of the crowd as the Martian first appears. Some of these discussed the broader aspects of the unknown, invasion, and human vulnerability that this moment exemplifies.

Less successful candidates focused too heavily on summarising the plot rather than analysing Wells's techniques for creating tension. Some misunderstood the concept of tension in literature, focusing only on



action rather than psychological suspense and a few focused solely on the Martians' physical appearance without addressing how Wells builds anticipation and fear.

**Question 20**

There were too few responses for meaningful comment.

**Question 21**

Although some candidates explored what makes the extract entertaining, most focused only on the innocence of the children and their misunderstandings. A few stronger candidates referred to the symbolism of the bull or the conversations of the children and how these contributed to the entertainment. They also commented on the children being compared to petals and its significance to their innocence. Some of these appreciated the word associations, for example, 'shins/funny bone' and the disjointed short sentences. Less successful answers did not explore features of the writing and lost focus on the key word of the question.

**Question 22**

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0475/21

Drama

## Key messages

- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Introductions with lengthy comments on the writer's life, plot summaries, or listing of writer's techniques to be addressed, are unproductive ways to begin an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- Commenting on quotations and punctuation, chosen at random, without exploring the context and making a link to the question, is unlikely to achieve reward.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

## General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set texts and an engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, were aware of the text as performance and commented on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved. It was pleasing to see that a new set text, *A Streetcar Named Desire* was a popular choice, along with the established set text, *Othello*. There were far fewer responses seen to *Death and the King's Horseman* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Centres are reminded that *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, will be replaced on the syllabus in 2025 by Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney.

Some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, or plot summaries, before referring to the question. In some cases, the actual terms of the chosen question were completely missed resulting in a retelling of the plot or passage. With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. There is no requirement for them to write a thesis statement or to summarise the plot before answering the specific question. In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage, is a helpful way to start an answer. It is also helpful for candidates to write a sentence or two, referencing the question, and giving a brief overview of the key points before going on to develop them in the main body of the essay. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the passage, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points may have been missed. Textual references which were selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text. Listing literary features as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'powerful' or 'shocking', is also an unproductive way to start a response. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill; simply working through a passage or the text, without focus on the terms of the question, is unlikely to achieve high reward.

An awareness that these texts are written to be performed on stage informed the most successful answers. These responses looked at the text from an audience perspective and commented on authors' intentions in regard to the audience and commented in detail on the dramatic impact created. They were aware that, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation or alliteration in the stage directions, rather than the tone and mood created, is unproductive. Many candidates referred to 'paragraphs', 'chapters' and the 'reader' when discussing drama. It would be useful to encourage the use of 'speech', 'scene' and 'audience' in practice answers. Even when candidates have not seen a performance of the play, it is important to consider the visual impact of characters' appearance and interaction on stage.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of material from the whole text, supporting points with quotation or very specific textual reference. The ability to integrate brief, well-selected

reference to the text is a key discriminator as indicated in the Level Descriptors. Candidates who memorise direct quotations are likely to be better prepared to analyse the ways in which writers achieve their effects (AO3). However, these should be fully explored rather than remain inert or used to support a narrative approach. Similarly, beginning a paragraph with a reference or quotation rather than supporting a point does little to develop an argument effectively.

All but a few candidates were clear about the exam requirement and answered one passage-based question and one discursive. The few rubric infringements seen were where candidates answered two passage-based questions. In this case, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded. There were many lengthy responses to the first essay resulting in some candidates running out of time on the second essay: an equal amount of time should be spent on both answers if candidates are to achieve marks in the higher levels, where well-developed and sustained responses are required to meet the marking criteria. 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.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly and to avoid numerous crossings out which often resulted in a loss of clarity in expression.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

##### **Question 1**

- (a) The most successful responses contextualised the extract and clarified that Ernestine was reading aloud Father Divine's long-awaited letter and that these views are not her own. Some answers responded very well to the questionable beliefs and tactics of the letter, the capitalised imperatives and grand claims of a '*direct line of communication*' with God, as well as the comic anti-climax of the letter's spiritual tone being undermined by the cynical and manipulative request for money: '*I know you won't let us starve*'. Some answers briefly referenced the disappointing outcome of the Holy Communion Banquet which confirms the extract's suggestion of Father Divine's sham care for followers. Brief reference to the significance of the extract in the wider play enables candidates to demonstrate understanding of deeper implications.

Some commented on Godfrey's personal and circumstantial susceptibility to Father Divine's cult, contextualising his devotion and the [*heavenly daze*] that prevents him seeing clearly. They evidenced and explored the contrast between Godfrey's earnest piety deriving from Father Divine's instruction and the girls' hopes and dreams of a movie outing or popularity with boys. Most candidates were able to draw out the humour provided by Ermina's visual and verbal reaction of horror to her new name although fewer engaged with the poignant comment from Ernestine revealing her developing sense of personal identity as '*a Crump*' and how this relates to the wider play's narrative trajectory. The contrast between the girls' responses, one a blunt rejection, '*Not me*', and the other shared only with the audience, was also considered entertaining, adding depth to characterisation. Stronger answers recognised the stage direction of Godfrey 'trying on' his new name to support the theme of an imposed identity and related this effectively to Ernestine's direct address to the audience and her concern over whether he is '*speaking for himself or Father Divine*'. Stronger responses considered how Nottage dramatises Godfrey's promise of a '*celebration*', only to provide an anti-climax and reversal in the final lines where Ernestine's hope of a united family event is overturned, seeing this moment as both 'serious' and 'entertaining'.

Weaker responses recognised the importance of Father Divine to Godfrey and broadly identified the serious issues of racial prejudice and inequality embodied in the letter, although with limited understanding of Father Divine's words. Most commented on the capitalisation of words and exclamations within the letter and some of the stage directions, for example '*[sucks her teeth]*' and '*[horrified]*' to demonstrate some understanding of dramatic effects, although many interpreted the capitals as Ernestine simply shouting rather than her reflecting the assertive style of the New Day publication. Many believed that these were Ernestine's views and the capitals reflected her own passion for the messages. Many did not reach the final lines of the extract and the anti-climax or failed to recognise that Ernestine's hope of a celebration is actually dashed. Some candidates attempted to identify individual elements in the extract which were simultaneously entertaining and

serious, which led to an unduly restrictive scope. When questions pose two areas of focus, it is not necessary to cover them equally or view them as combined.

- (b) Too few responses for comment.

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

**Question 2**

- (a) Many candidates answering this question struggled with the language of the passage although their general knowledge of the play and of Elesin's later actions was evident. Most were able to comment on Elesin's arrogance and overconfidence with a little textual support and the best responses identified the irony of these characteristics in the light of later events in the play, particularly his belief in being '*master of [his] fate*'. The stronger responses made reference to the questions of the women and the bold responses from Elesin to support this reading of the character's confidence. The best response moved beyond this single point and considered the Praise Singer's description of Elesin as a '*rock*' and a '*gay thoroughbred whose stride disdains to falter*' where the character's importance in the community, and the proleptic irony of these descriptions, was made clear. This point was developed and supported by the women's description of Elesin as privileged, '*the very land was yours*', and that Elesin's repetition of '*mine*' reflects both his status and forewarns of his ultimate reluctance to relinquish his greedy hold on life.

However, the majority struggled to engage effectively with the language, not making reference to the Not-I bird, any of Elesin's opening comments or the vivid description throughout. None made reference to Elesin's description of his relationship with his '*master*', his attitude to death or his '*welcome*' to the Not-I bird. Weaker responses had very little textual support and were also unclear of the context of the moment. They often attempted to introduce other information about the characters to substitute for consideration of the material in this extract.

- (b) The majority of responses took the 'To what extent ...' stem of the question as a cue to say they agreed to a great extent with the assertion and that they strongly disliked the British characters. Most were able to point to examples of the British characters' racism, though relatively few explored the tragic outcome of Pilkings' prevention of Elesin's suicide for Olunde or indeed the potential destruction of Yoruban society. Very few considered the representation of the British beyond the Pilkings.

The strongest answers explored the British characters' generally dismissive attitudes and lack of comprehension of Yoruban culture, giving examples such as the sacrilegious Egungun dress for the Residency Ball and Pilkings' attempt to prevent Elesin's ritual death. The best answers briefly considered when Pilkings and his wife were motivated by better moral intentions, for example in their support of Olunde, although a balanced argument was not obligatory and candidates were free to take up the position of their choice. Most candidates recognised Pilkings' position as illustrative of the colonial power Soyinka is critiquing. They cited Pilkings' dismissive and insulting language and his patronising treatment of Amusa and Joseph to support ideas of the English characters' narrow-minded belief in the superiority of western culture. The '*disbelief*' and '*mute*' reaction of Amusa to the Egungun, Pilkings' bullying tone, and his dismissal of Amusa's concerns as '*rubbish*', were effectively employed as specific examples of the British characters' lack of understanding, alongside their self-seeking desire for '*first prize*' and to pander to '*His Highness*' rather than grasp the importance of the cultural issue at hand.

Isolated responses distinguished between Simon and Jane and credited the latter with attempting to curb Simon's insulting language and having at least some intellectual curiosity. Some stronger answers cited the scene with Jane Pilkings and Olunde and how this conversation reveals her inability to understand Olunde's arguments regarding self-sacrifice and make the connection with her own culture, eliciting an unfavourable response from audiences. Such responses had memorised quotations or specific references to draw upon to support an argument that Soyinka is positioning audiences to disapprove of the English characters.

Weaker answers focused on one moment only, usually Scene 2 with the Engungun '*costumes*', with very few answers referencing later scenes of the play. All candidates could offer a personal response to the question but the sparse textual reference limited reward for many answers and meant that most stayed at a basic level.

**TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

**Question 3**

- (a) All candidates found this to be an accessible question and even weaker responses engaged and could offer some comment on Blanche's characterisation and show some knowledge of the wider play, often discussing her nervousness and anxiety. Most answers could recognise Blanche's snobbery, her inability to face the light and her desperate escape in drink, these being the three areas that featured in most responses.

Stronger candidates were able to range widely across the extract and also explore what the extract revealed about the sisters' relationship, contrasting Blanche's dramatic delusional vanity with Stella's quiet and restrained sincerity. They were able to engage with details of language and stagecraft, recognising Blanche's domination of the discourse, her repetitive, exclamatory speech and agitation, alongside Stella's comparative reserve, measured speech and action '*[carefully pouring]*'. Stronger responses considered implications for the wider play and how Stella's compliance and limited resistance to Blanche's domination prepares the audience for her submission to Stanley's forceful nature. They could offer a nuanced analysis of the sisters' relationship and its combination of closeness and friction. The more successful answers could contextualise Blanche's horror at the apartment and recognise the irony of her criticism given her straitened circumstances. When candidates recognised the hesitancy in mentioning Stanley, some interpreted this as revealing the gap in the sisters' recent history or Blanche's disapproval, and considered how this anticipates the looming menace of Stanley once he returns from his masculine sport. There was understanding of Blanche's denials and evasions regarding her drinking and her reasons for leaving her post, with the strongest answers closely unpicking how Blanche's speeches intimate that she is being guarded, for example the final broken line suggesting she is unwilling to be completely frank about why her '*nerves broke*'.

In terms of anticipating both later events and the subsequent revelations about Blanche's past, stronger answers were able to strike a balance and determine motifs, such as the light, which figure significantly through the play, but also consider the experience of audiences viewing this play for the first time, the impressions created, tensions detected and suspicions aroused. Those who considered contextual elements and that Blanche had already helped herself to a drink, could comment that the audience has been placed in a privileged position and alerted to her propensity for deception.

Less successful answers focused only on the evidence of Blanche's drinking and nervousness, making a judgement of her being an alcoholic and closing off any further discussion, often claiming that this causes her downfall. Some candidates wrote lengthy disquisitions on Blanche's name or the symbolism of 'Stella for Star' at the expense of a wider range of material. Prepared socio-historical material on 'The New America versus the Old South' featured in many answers but was sometimes unhelpful if not related to the extract itself. Weaker responses tended to focus largely on the stage directions and exclamatory speech but with more limited focus on what the characters actually say. Such responses often lapsed into narrative, attempting to show understanding of Blanche's back-story but with insufficient focus on the question of how this moment is 'revealing'.

- (b) Stronger answers explored Stanley's dramatic physicality, for example: bringing home the pack of meat, his aggressive and dominating alpha male behaviour at the poker game and the shock of the rape scene. The best could evidence this precisely with stage direction for example '*[he charges]*' or Blanche '*[sinks to her knees]*' as if taken down by a stronger opponent. It was useful for candidates to contextualise Blanche's criticisms of Stanley as bestial and illuminate the basis of her objections. Answers which discussed toxic masculinity and Stanley's domination, over both his territory and his mate, engaged well with themes of the play and considered character motivation clearly. Several answers recognised that both Stella and Blanche comment on Stanley's behaviour and manners, seeing him as a '*different species*', perhaps underpinned by their notions of Southern gentlemen, and that stage directions such as Stanley as a '*richly feathered male bird among hens*' illuminate his relationship with Stella where poor behaviour is excused on the basis of his sexual prowess. They related this description to Stanley's vibrant clothing, recognising Williams' use of expressionistic dramatic effects. Many candidates referenced 'plastic theatre' but only the stronger ones clarified how costumes, effects such as jungle noises and the combative nature of the poker game could be seen as relevant to this question. Some strong answers discussed Stanley's more vulnerable moments, for example when he apologises and expresses his love to Stella, sobbing when he thinks she has left him. Very few gave a balanced argument but those that did so cited his

history as a master sergeant or considered the irony of Blanche's accusations given some of her own flaws. Stronger answers referenced how Stanley's dominance and Blanche's contesting his position creates some of the most dramatic scenes of the play, and that Stanley overhearing Blanche's damning criticism of him as '*subhuman*' creates great tension and propels his cruel actions. They were able to support their argument with reference to such specific textual details and relevant quotations.

Weaker responses saw the question as an invitation to simply provide a character assassination and adduce any of Stanley's random actions to animal behaviour, even throwing the radio out of the window, with limited reference to context or Williams' ideas, meaning that deeper implications were not elicited. Some less successful responses provided a character study but with limited relation to the play's themes or how audiences are persuaded to adopt this view. In some narrative based responses, knowledge seemed to be derived from cinema versions of the play rather than the written text.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) All those choosing this question showed clear engagement with the question and understood that Bottom's ebullience creates comical effects. Nearly all responses explored his exaggerated beliefs about his own acting ability, with some textual support. Some of the better responses commented that the other mechanicals do not correct his efforts, perhaps accepting him as the dominant member of the group or revealing their own ignorance that his ideas are absurd, whilst others discussed the difficulties of Quince in trying to keep him under control.

The best responses could support their view of the character with quotations illustrating the nature of his boasts and pinpointed mistakes and malapropisms. Some recognised the conflation of '*sitting dove*' and '*sucking lamb*', the mispronunciation of Thisby, Phoebus and Hercules, the incongruity of '*roar*' with '*nightingale*', the oxymoronic '*monstrous little*' and comic repetition of '*let me*'. The very best commented on Bottom's vanity in anticipating Theseus' rapturous reception and even mimicking his voice. They contextualised the scene, understanding where the play will be performed and that it is actually a tragedy being reduced to a comedy. Some demonstrated wider textual knowledge and recognised that the scene anticipates Bottom's elevated status in the scene with Titania, where he again assumes a supposedly dignified role but with humorous effects, or that the extract prepares us for the mechanicals' final entertaining performance, giving an early flavour of this comic climax.

The weaker answers stayed very much at the surface of the text and recognised Bottom's enthusiasm and eagerness to play all parts but with limited engagement with the language and without comment on the contribution of the other players. Some candidates, attempting to explore language, made confusing and unproductive references to Bottom's name, relating it to 'ass'.

- (b) Fewer responses to this question were seen but all engaged with the character and recognised the enjoyment that Puck brings to audiences. The most successful answers ranged across Puck's contribution to the play and did not narrow their focus on one aspect or particular scene. All were able to identify Puck's identity as Oberon's servant, his mischievous nature, enjoyment of tricks and magical powers although comments were often descriptive, without precise support and detail.

Stronger answers explored how Puck gives Bottom the head of an ass causing Titania to fall in love with him and the comically dramatic results that ensue, announced with delight to Oberon: '*my mistress with a monster is in love*'. They recognised that this provides much visual humour on stage. They commented on the chaos caused by the error in anointing the wrong '*Athenian*' and some referenced his unabashed enjoyment of the mistake. The best included the introduction to the character and how the dialogue with Fairy outlines many of his characteristics and supernatural powers, preparing the audience for the mayhem to follow. They commented that this prepares the audience for Puck's free, unruly spirit, beyond being subject to Oberon's service. He operates under his own volition, choosing to create mayhem with the ass's head and thus having huge dramatic impact as his actions are unpredictable and wayward. They also pointed out that he resolves all the chaos he has wrought in accordance with the genre conventions of comedy. The best answer referenced Puck breaking the fourth wall in the epilogue, and the dramatic impact this has on audiences, engaging directly with the character and being included in the '*dream*' experience.

Weaker responses tended to narrate the events of the play relevant to the character, focused on one event and lacked precise textual detail. Consideration of language demonstrating Puck's distinctive voice and the singular impact he has within the play was lacking in these responses.

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

### **Question 5**

- (a) Successful answers discussed the strength of Othello's love for Desdemona and how striking it was, linking to its deeper implications and significance in the wider play. Othello's calmness and confidence were widely recognised as striking features of his first appearance and more developed answers commented on his defusing the threat posed by Brabantio in a dignified manner, retaining politeness in his terms of address, '*good signior*', even in the face of accusations of being a '*thief*'. One response discussed the contrast between the underhand tactics of Iago, agitating Othello with threats of Brabantio's power and urging him to retreat inside, with Othello's openness and clipped certainty in '*Not I; I must be found*'. Stronger responses recognised the command Othello demonstrates through his interactions with the various characters who address him with urgency or violence, whilst he holds his ground. There was a range of views regarding Othello's claim that his '*services*' for Venice would '*out-tongue*' Brabantio's accusations, some interpreting this as justified military pride and simple confidence in his stature or alternatively the hubris that helps to orchestrate his downfall. Most argued that his rhetoric and vocabulary presents him as poetic and dignified, the triplet '*My parts, my title, and my perfect soul*' signifying confidence and lack of guilt, '*title*' referring to him being Desdemona's husband or his military rank. Alternatively, other valid responses viewed this as indicative of arrogance although candidates rarely noted that Othello does not believe that '*boasting is an honour*' and is making these declarations to Iago alone.

The contributions of Cassio, Iago and Brabantio were considered fruitfully in the stronger responses. Cassio's urgent news that Othello is '*hotly called for*' '*even on the instant*' and that '*three several quests*' have sought him establish Othello as a vital, valued figure in Venice. Stronger answers briefly considered that Othello confiding in Iago could be seen as the first signifier of his misplaced trust. This was supported by the audience's recognition of the dramatic irony of Iago's oath '*By Janus*' and that they witness Iago's denigrating description of Othello's marriage, '*he hath boarded a land carrack*', delivered '*behind Othello's back*'. However, those responses which interpreted the character as wholly arrogant, complacent, gullible or flawed lacked nuance and dismissed this introduction to Othello's evident qualities which strikingly establish the hero at his height. Stronger answers recognised the significance of this first impression in the wider play, setting up the tragedy to come, where the calm, rational and measured character established here will be undermined, resulting in him losing both Desdemona and his idea of himself.

It was very helpful for candidates to consider the context of this scene and how Othello strikingly contrasts the image previously established by Iago, Roderigo and Brabantio. However, many heavily drifted from this extract and focused on the first scene and its presentation of racist attitudes to Othello, which was relevant but often meant salient material from Act 1 Scene 2 was skipped over. Most candidates referenced the theme of racial prejudice and whilst stronger answers discussed the attitudes of the characters briefly, before linking them to the scene, the weaker responses diverged into tangential and lengthy explorations of Jacobean attitudes to race or the racist insults from Scene 1 at the expense of the language here.

Weaker answers generally noted individual characteristics of Othello in the scene, such as his bravery, self-confidence or love for Desdemona, but looked only at Othello's speech and not the contributions of Cassio, Iago, Brabantio. Discussion of language and the dramatic effects of the threat of violence tended not to feature in the weaker responses. There was a noticeable tendency in a small number of responses for literary terms such as '*hamartia*' and '*megalopsychia*' to be used which were more often than not unhelpful when not explored clearly.

- (b) There was a wealth of material to draw from and the brief of the question invited a personal response but necessitated a focus on how Shakespeare's portrayal prompts that response. All commented on the character's duplicity and his manipulative nature. Most considered Iago's motivation and the strongest answers explored his claims of jealousy and revenge at being passed over but also recognised the more sinister evidence of an evil nature in Iago's cynical desire to humiliate and destroy others. Such answers considered the sympathy the audience may initially feel and contrasted this with antipathy and horror as the play progresses. More developed answers

considered how Iago builds a relationship with the audience, as well as with the characters, and the importance of soliloquies in affording a close view of his 'true' self and his candid reductive view of others as '*snipes*' or '*asses*'.

Many answers responded to Iago's ill-treatment of Emilia and that Shakespeare positions audiences to feel anger at his misogyny, evident also in his seemingly joking comments about women at the quayside and his pretence of sympathising with Desdemona when orchestrating her murder. The best answers analysed the diabolic imagery, his crude view of sexuality and his cynical view of love, loyalty and humanity as revealed in the language choices Shakespeare employs.

The strongest were able to discuss the audience's growing sense of frustration at being witness to Iago's villainy and their simultaneous fascination with his success at manipulating all around him, perhaps even inviting some admiration at Iago's cleverness and his ability to disguise his duplicity effectively. Again, close reference to his manipulative skills was a marker of the most successful responses, for example his ability to 're-enact' Cassio's sleep-talking, to tantalise Othello with hints or '*trifles light as air*', to stage-manage events and to shrewdly and accurately predict character's responses such as Cassio being '*as quarrelsome as my young mistress's dog*' when drunk. Comments on the dramatic tension created by his plan falling into place and his eventual exposure providing relief for audiences appeared in some answers although the later events featured in fewer responses, perhaps due to time restraints.

Weaker responses tended to retell the story, provide a character study and itemise the many villainous actions performed by the character and how reprehensible those actions were. These were relevant to the question but did not lead to a well-developed response because they lacked focus on dramatic effects, for example pathos for Iago's victims, the tension created by audience knowledge and how Shakespeare's language positions audiences to be disturbed by this character.



# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0475/22

Drama

## Key messages

- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Beginning a response with lengthy comments on the writer's life, works and times, giving plot summaries or listing the writer's techniques to be addressed are unproductive ways to start an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- Commenting on quotations and punctuation, chosen at random, without exploring the context and linking it to the question, is unlikely to achieve reward.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

## General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set texts and an engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, were aware of the text as performance and commented on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved. It was pleasing to see that the new set texts, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream* were popular choices though the most popular text, across all components, was *Othello*. There were far fewer responses seen to both *Death and the King's Horseman* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. Centres are reminded that *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* will be replaced on the syllabus in 2025 by Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney.

Some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, or plot summaries, before referring to the question. In some cases, the actual terms of the chosen question were completely missed resulting in a retelling of the plot or passage. With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. There is no requirement for them to write a thesis statement or to retell the plot before answering the specific question. In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage, is a helpful way to start an answer. It is also helpful for candidates to write a sentence or two referencing the question and giving a brief overview of the key points before going on to develop them in the main body of the essay. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the passage, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points may have been missed. Textual references which were selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text. Listing literary features as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'powerful' or 'shocking', is also an unproductive way to start a response. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill; simply working through a passage or the text, without focus on the terms of the question is unlikely to achieve high reward.

An awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage informed the most successful answers. They were aware that, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created seems unproductive. 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 and to outline their own, or propose other audience members', responses.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of material from the whole text, supporting points with quotation or very specific textual reference. The ability to integrate brief, well-selected reference to the text is a key discriminator as indicated in the Level Descriptors. Candidates who memorise direct quotations are likely to be better prepared to analyse the ways in which writers achieve their effects

(AO3). However, these should be fully explored rather than remain inert or used to support a narrative approach. Similarly, beginning a paragraph with a reference or quotation rather than supporting a point does little to develop an argument effectively.

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms that are not helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded; techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. Candidates often refer to punctuation – exclamation marks, capital letters, dashes – while seeking to comment on dialogue but without the context which is unhelpful. These can be relevant, and important, but only if related to the ideas conveyed in the text. Candidates should avoid stating the obvious, for example, the writer uses ‘diction’ or ‘vocabulary’ and should focus on analysing specific language and the effects achieved.

On Paper 2, all but a few candidates were clear about the exam requirement and answered one passage-based question and one discursive. The few rubric infringements seen were where candidates answered two passage-based questions. In this case, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded. There were many lengthy responses to the first essay resulting in some candidates running out of time on the second essay: an equal amount of time should be spent on both answers if candidates are to achieve marks in the higher levels, where well-developed and sustained responses are required to meet the marking criteria. 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.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly and to avoid numerous crossings out which often resulted in a loss of clarity in expression.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This was the most popular of the Nottage questions. The most successful answers started by commenting that Ernestine was the narrator in the extract, understanding her breaking the fourth wall and creating a bond between her and the audience, and that this was a major influence in garnering sympathy. They developed a range of points about why the audience feel sympathy for Ernestine and how Nottage achieved this effect. Candidates engaged well with the ideas: Ernestine’s grief over her mother; the significance of her upcoming graduation; the symbolism of the dress; the financial struggles leading to the theft of the lace and Ermina’s leg shaking reflecting the anxiety and guilt; Godfrey’s decision to treat his new wife rather than buy the lace for his daughter and the critical comments from the inebriated Lily with Ernestine’s ‘*Wounded*’ response. Many candidates commented on the importance of Lily as a role model to Ernestine and Ernestine’s maturity which is reflected in the way she challenges her aunt near the end of the extract.

Stronger answers showed understanding of the social context in which Ernestine’s graduation as a young black woman is of particular significance. Contextually, stronger answers effectively integrated analysis of stage directions and symbols, analysing how Nottage employs these elements to deepen audience empathy for Ernestine’s struggles and aspirations. They made links to the historical experiences of the black community at the time and saw Ernestine and Godfrey as representative of a past and more modern approach to social circumstances by the black community, but without lapsing into socio-historical commentary, losing focus on the terms of the question.

Less secure responses tended to focus on the interaction between Ernestine and Lily, ignoring the earlier part of the extract and offered little more than a paraphrase, or summary, with comment. Where used, the impact of quotations chosen was not explored, resulting in a re-telling of the scene or a character study of Lily and her shortcomings and strengths, missing the requirements of the question.

The weakest answers failed to focus on question and extract and instead provided a narrative based approach to events in which Ernestine was involved in the play or wrote a general description of her character. Some only focused on part of the extract, for example Sandra's death and the impact which this had or the fact that Ernestine had to make the dress herself and how this was hard work for her with her studies. Some candidates focused only on the background to the play and the poverty and racial aspects of society at the time. This evoked sympathy in that Ernestine was black and therefore subject to racial discrimination.

- (b) The wording of the question, 'To what extent', invited candidates to explore Godfrey's character and the most successful answers acknowledged that Godfrey was a complex character who had weaknesses and strengths, providing specific and well-selected textual support for their views. The best answers were those which empathetically tried to understand Godfrey's position: the recent loss of his wife, Sandra; the fear of racism that made him not want to stand out or stand up to racists, and the context of USA in the '50s for a black family.

The strongest answers showed awareness of his strength as he moved his family for a fresh start. They saw him as a loving father in a difficult situation and explored the challenges that he faced after his wife's death with his decisions to stop drinking, to fight off Lily's advances and to establish a principled upbringing for his daughters through religion, even if he did not always do the best job. Many answers explored the opening of the play and his crippling grief, engaging effectively with Ernestine's use of the '*wailing like a banshee*' image. Other strengths explored were his determination to provide for his children and his rejection of social expectations in marrying Gerte, as well as his relationship with his job.

Many candidates focused mainly on his weaknesses. One area of weakness which was explored effectively was Godfrey's obsession with Father Divine, blindly following an exploitative organisation which ultimately lets him down and renders him incapable of making a decision. Stronger responses explored the motif of the notebook, bags of paper and how Gerte leads him to eventually acknowledge his own foolishness with the destruction of the notes.

Weaker answers merely stated that Godfrey was weak by citing his neglect of his daughters due to his grief and his insensitivity to the loss of their mother, demonstrated by his hasty marriage to Gerte, prioritising her needs over theirs, for example, buying her the cardigan whilst not being able to afford the lace for Ernestine's graduation dress. There was little evidence of how the 'weakness' was displayed and understanding was often at surface level in a narrative approach. Although focusing on Godfrey, weaker answers provided a summary of the play rather than exploring what events and his behaviour conveyed of his character to the audience.

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

### **Question 2**

- (a) Some candidates struggled with the extract, confusing who was speaking to whom. Answers which argued that this was a conversation between the girls and Amusa were at a disadvantage, as this failed to understand the comedy of the girls mocking Amusa, parodying the colonial rulers and demonstrating the girls' knowledge of their habits, speech and opinions.

The most successful responses understood the context of the extract and the serious aspect that Amusa had been sent to arrest Elesin to prevent his ritual suicide which the girls were determined to prevent. They were able to recognise the mockery and the satire in the girls' parody of the British but often this was presented as paraphrase and explanation. Some stronger responses were able to recognise the irony of the fact that the girls' language was taken from the British stereotypes, proof in itself of the serious misconception that the British have of the 'natives' and of their oppression through colonial rule. Only the strongest answers recognised that the girls imitate the British and play-act that Amusa has no invitation to the British Residency and explored how well the girls understood what the British thought of them, their habit of seeing Africans mainly in relation to insulting stereotypes.

Many candidates commented on the fact that it was also evidence of the power of women in the Yoruban culture, from Iyaloja to the girls themselves, who are clearly well educated if they can so successfully mock Amusa. Few recognised that it was the older women who were '*tittering*', and little was made of the visual impact on stage of the girls taking the policemen's hats or, at the end of the passage, their '*surging forward*' to remove what they amusingly referred to as his '*knickers*'.

A few made sensitive comments expressing sympathy for Amusa stating that he was a 'misfit' in society as the white people did not respect him, and the natives mocked him, and so this was a serious element to the extract as it reflected his unenviable predicament.

Less successful answers focused on colonial rule and British attitudes to the Nigerian population, gaining some credit for comments on the description of Amusa as an 'ox' and how the girls surprise him into jumping to attention. Weaker responses did not understand the girls were mocking the English and took the conversation literally.

- (b) Most who answered this question appreciated that Olunde represents a bridge between the Yoruban and the British way of life. Some struggled with the idea of his 'dramatic impact', failing to focus on key theatrical moments, for example when Olunde finds out his father is alive, or when he rejects his father, or when his swaddled corpse appears on stage. They were able to demonstrate knowledge of the text and of Olunde's background: Elesin's son, sent to England by the Pilkings to study medicine. Only the strongest responses were able to explore Olunde's role in replacing Elesin, committing suicide to preserve order in the land – the father representing pleasure and the son duty, a reversal of the usual father-son dynamic. These answers analysed the communication, and misunderstanding, in the conversation between Olunde and Jane Pilkings, commenting on his calm, intelligence and self-assurance, by being aware of his history and by understanding why Jane Pilkings is disappointed in him. They were able to comment on the dramatic impact of his first entrance on stage that leads the audience to expect that he has been fully assimilated into the western culture making it particularly dramatic when the audience realises that he has committed ritual suicide in place of his father, Elesin.

Weaker responses consisted of a character profile, or a retelling of the plot, with limited focus or understanding of the requirements of the question. Some candidates were unable to refer to specific textual detail and answers were very general and explanatory in approach. There was some misreading of the text with candidates mistakenly thinking he had returned to see his father before he dies, rather than to bury him. There were some who seemed unaware that he has killed himself and the body brought on to stage is in fact Olunde's.

## TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

### Question 3

- (a) This was a popular choice of text and question. Candidates engaged with the extract and with the play as a whole. Surprisingly, where context was commented on, the only points mentioned tended to be the fact that Blanche and Stella had been out and the men had been playing poker. Only the most successful answers commented on the fact that Mitch has already been introduced to Blanche and that she has quizzed Stella about his background because he seems 'superior' to the other men, particularly Stanley. These candidates commented on her seductive behaviour, the '[dark red satin wrap]' and her attempts to project a romanticised image of herself. Better responses saw Blanche as both predator and victim here, recognising her cunning and deceit but also her desperation.

Not all candidates expressed any sympathy for her but the ones who did generally offered a more insightful and nuanced response, recognising that her words of comfort to Mitch are both genuine and also part of her strategy to build a relationship. There was awareness that Mitch is a strongly contrasting character to Stanley and that Blanche begins to see him as her last hope. There was focus on the discussion around the inscribed lighter, Blanche's '[feigned]' difficulty in reading as a way to get closer to Mitch, and on the drama of her words: 'Sick people have such deep, sincere attachments.' The symbol of the naked light bulb was much discussed. Most candidates were able to offer some insights and knowledge of character through the symbol of the lantern; Blanche's lies about her age and her drinking of alcohol, and these were contrasted with Mitch's sincerity and care in helping her put up the lantern.

In less successful answers there was some exposition on the Old South/New America, represented by Blanche and Mitch, but this was not always relevant. There was some misunderstanding of the text where candidates did not understand the stage direction '[feigned]' and commented on this revealing Blanche's poor eyesight and, consequently, her age. There were some unusual interpretations of the '[red satin wrapper]' with some stating that because it was red it foreshadowed Mitch attempting to rape her, whilst others linked the colour red to the devil.

Weaker candidates discussed this meeting without close reference to the question, offering a paraphrasing of, or a commentary on the conversation without much focus on what makes it 'memorable'. Too often they lapsed into narrative, retelling Blanche's history and the suicide of her young husband.

- (b) This was a popular question and there was a wide range of answers seen. The most successful were aware of the tension between Stanley and Blanche and identified that part of the tension between them was the power struggle for Stella's approval and love. There was understanding of the conflict between the Old South and the New America, represented by Blanche and Stanley and the contrast in their backgrounds, lifestyles, values. Many were aware too of the physical contrast between the slight, fragile Blanche and the strong, muscular Stanley. They engaged with the relationship and were able to offer deeper interpretations of why their relationship is so dramatic. They focused on key scenes: Blanche's arrival and how her physical appearance contrasts with Stanley; Stanley overhearing Blanche telling Stella what she thinks about him; the rape scene and Blanche's departure with Stanley's final victory in the power struggle. The role of Stanley in uncovering the truth about Blanche and how this ultimately ended the relationship with Mitch was explored with critical understanding of the dramatic impact and staging. The best answers referenced his rape and deliberate forcing of Blanche into the world of reality whilst exploring the language, visual and aural effects of the shadows and the jungle noises, to show how the drama of the moment was made powerful. They were able to support their argument with reference to specific textual detail and relevant quotations.

Less successful responses tended to be more general in their comments, narrating parts of the play, and did not focus on how the relationship was made so 'powerfully dramatic'. Some wrote two character studies exploring their differences rather than focusing on key moments in their interaction and how they were dramatic. A few candidates misread the question and wrote about Stanley and Stella, rather than Stanley and Blanche with little of relevance to reward.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) This was a popular choice of text and question. The most successful answers established context briefly: Puck's error with the love potion results in both men loving Helena, Hermia is angry because she thinks Helena has stolen Lysander's love whilst Helena feels victimised because she thinks the other three are playing a trick on her. Candidates who did not have this clear understanding of the context were at a disadvantage. Those who did explored the insults in some detail, with the best not just explaining what they mean, but relating interpretations to this context, for example, 'juggler' with hints of juggling lovers, 'cankerblossom', that you may have a beauty which attracted the men, but you are diseased inside and 'thief' because Helena stole Lysander. Some commented on the humour of the ridiculous insult, their hilarious sounds, and the situation of two highly-born women, previously fairly genteel, throwing stupid and childish insults and threatening violence; some focused on their differences, for example, Helena tries to back down, whilst Hermia tries to fight back.

Better responses explored the humour of the dramatic turnaround of the women's friendship into enemies and Lysander's intense love for Hermia into his distaste for her. There was also the humour of Helena's previous grief at Demetrius not loving her and now that both men are declaring undying love for her, she does not believe them. The best candidates were able to comment on the visual staging of the height differences with close detail to the language, 'low', 'little', 'dwarf' and the final demeaning insults from Lysander on size, as well as 'maypole', and how this creates humour. There were some sensitive responses to the emotional and upsetting aspects of the scene for the women and how, nevertheless, it was entertaining due to the dramatic irony: the audience knowing it is temporary and will be put right. There were some good personal responses to Shakespeare's theme, for example, love being presented as fickle, ruining the sisterhood and loyalty of friends and love being blind.

Less successful answers were unclear about the situation with some confusion of characters and who loves whom. Some showed no knowledge of Puck's error and seemed genuinely confused about the use of language, providing a literal 'translation' and asserting certain words were entertaining but conveying little understanding of the language, situation, or how it was made so. They tended to be plot driven including some lengthy preambles about what had led to this point in

the play. Responses were narrative in approach simply re-telling the events of the extract rather than exploring how it was entertaining.

- (b) The most successful answers considered what Oberon did in the play, and why, to decide how far they thought he was likeable. Most paid close attention to the question and produced balanced answers. They contrasted his affairs, his desire for the changeling boy and his dealings with Titania, against his compassion for Helena, his insistence on rectifying Puck's errors, his pity for Titania, and how he wishes the humans well by blessing the marriages at the end. There were some strong personal responses addressing Oberon's 'controlling' and 'abusive' behaviour towards Titania and his desire for power, including his use of 'illegal' or 'unfair' drugs to get his way. Better answers noted that he only pities Titania after he gets what he wants and looked at his relationship with Puck, accusing him of encouraging Puck's reckless behaviour at the start, but when Oberon finds his error with the potion he is exasperated and insists it is rectified. A few candidates noted that he does not leave Titania to Puck but he applies the potion to Titania and removes it himself. Most finally arrived at the conclusion that his acts were worthy of admiration due to his sympathy for Helena and removal of the 'hateful' vision from Titania to restore order and ensure all the lovers have a partner. The best candidates were able to explore the dramatic impact of Oberon and Puck's use of the love potion, supporting their argument with specific textual detail and some well-selected quotations which were thoroughly analysed.

Less successful answers tended to find him totally 'likeable' to the point of defending his cruel treatment of Titania to 'torment' her for the supposed 'injury' but these were not always convincingly argued. Others responded to the climate changes he and Titania cause by quarrelling, but found it difficult to relate this to whether he is 'likeable' or not.

Weaker answers wrote a character study of Oberon with little reference to the question of his likeability. There was also some misunderstanding with some thinking he had given Bottom the ass's head for her to fall in love with. Some candidates, attempting to explore language, made confusing references to Bottom/ass/arse demonstrating a fundamental misunderstanding of the text and language.

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

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was the most popular text and most candidates answered this question. Candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge of the text but should be reminded to focus on the question and extract: some candidates used information from previous questions, for example, on Iago and attempted to adapt it to this question, often unsuccessfully.

The most successful answers provided detailed comments on what made this moment both dramatic and significant. They were able to contextualise the extract, briefly, and to incorporate other salient moments from the play to demonstrate the 'significance', without losing focus on the question and extract. There was understanding that Iago had orchestrated the drunken brawl which has led to Cassio's demotion and most answers explored Cassio's distress, selecting examples of repetition, exclamation and hyperbole in his language. Many responses honed in on the opening line and the repetition of '*my reputation*'. Better responses explored the meaning and effect of '*reputation*' on Cassio in the context of the times and made the link between honour and reputation.

Most answers explored the dramatic irony, along with the use of sibilance and other language features, connecting them to the question requirements securely. There was understanding of Iago's claims of love, honesty and advice in this scene and that Iago's advice is, in fact, a key step in his insidious plan to destroy Cassio, Othello and Desdemona. Stronger answers engaged with the religious imagery especially to the 'devil' and explored the irony that Iago is the real devil. They explored the animal imagery – dog, lion and parrot with strong responses linking Cassio's comment on wine making him '*speak parrot*' and men '*putting an enemy in their mouths*' to Iago's manipulation of him later with Desdemona.

Other valuable points included comparison of Cassio's distress and Iago's composed and manipulative manner, exploration of how Iago succeeds in calming Cassio down through the passage and has completely persuaded him by the end, discussion of the breakdown of Cassio's language, its fragmentation and use of bestial imagery, and the recognition of Shakespeare's use of prose in this passage and its effect. Many answers included relevant reference to Iago's plan to

make Othello jealous; however, some answers focused too much on the scheme against Othello, paying insufficient attention to the passage itself.

Less successful answers simply narrated the scene with the weakest responses focussing on a character study of Iago, therefore not meeting the question requirements fully. A number of responses mentioned '*beasts*' and '*devil*' and hellish motifs being repeated but failed to explore the significance of this. Some candidates focused entirely on punctuation, for example, the use of short sentences: '*I know not*' and '*Drunk!*' but were unable to develop or link their choices to the question. Line references, rather than direct quotations, resulted in responses being underdeveloped and the loss of opportunities to explore the ways the writer achieved effects which is a requirement to meet the criteria for marks in the higher levels.

- (b) Many candidates argued assertively that Brabantio is not sympathetic due to his racist and misogynistic outlook. The strongest answers were able to consider both his sympathetic and less sympathetic aspects. These answers showed understanding of the Jacobean context with its patriarchal, gender and hierarchical norms. However, there were some sweeping generalisations about the prejudices of Jacobean audiences with many candidates overlooking the fact that Othello was accepted by Brabantio before the marriage with no reference to his ethnicity. Stronger answers looked at how Brabantio is provoked by Iago and Roderigo's language, betrayed by his daughter and dismissed later by the Duke. They engaged effectively with the inherent racism and sexism in Brabantio's accusations in Act 1. The language Brabantio used when referring to Othello was explored with better answers exploring the way he was confronted in the middle of the night, caught unawares and publicly shamed by Iago and Roderigo. The sexual imagery, linked to animals was explored as something difficult for any father, no matter what the race of the man.

Some answers explored valuably his final, ironic, warning to Othello and Desdemona's betrayal. There was understanding of Brabantio's loss of face and its importance to him with some noting that he was one of Iago's early victims. Candidates explored his sense of betrayal, contrasting a loving father missing his daughter with his encouraging Othello to doubt her trustworthiness and the implications of this. Some responses examined the idea of Brabantio's 'ownership' of his daughter, with a more modern perspective, and whether he deserved sympathy.

Weaker candidates often focused on the idea that Brabantio is a 'loving' father but offered little evidence to support this. Some candidates took a very personal response here, imagining how they would feel if their loving child betrayed them. While this showed engagement with the question, it often led to limited engagement with the actual text. There was a common misunderstanding of what happens to Brabantio at the end, whether he was dead or alive when Desdemona died but most candidates saw that in a way Brabantio was right to be concerned about the marriage considering his daughter was murdered.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0475/23

Drama

## Key messages

- Successful responses focused on the key question terms and avoided writing introductions which consisted largely of plot summaries or explorations of historical context. Effective conclusions were more than a repetition of previous ideas.
- A personal engagement with the text as drama and an awareness of stagecraft was demonstrated by the most successful responses.
- A range of textual support and full analysis of references was a feature of the most successful responses. Precise, contextualised quotations were the most effective form of textual support.
- Successful responses were aware that the contextualisation of the passage is important in passage-based responses, and they selected material from throughout the passage, including the ending. Close analysis of the language was a feature of successful responses.
- Less successful responses commented on the use of literary techniques without considering their intended effect or how they relate to the content and context of the passage.
- Successful responses to the discursive questions kept the question in focus and precise textual references from throughout the text were used to support arguments.

## General comments

Many candidates demonstrated engagement with, and enjoyment of their set texts and some excellent work was seen. There were two new texts this year, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Centres are reminded that *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, will be replaced on the set syllabus texts in 2025 by Shakespeare's, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney.

The most successful responses showed critical understanding of the texts and made a perceptive and sensitive response to characterisation, stagecraft and language. These drama texts were written to be performed on stage and successful responses engaged with this fact and with the impact of visual and aural effects on the audience. Referring to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'book' demonstrated this awareness. Some weaker responses tended to summarise the plot, listing knowledge about the play but with no link to the question.

Successful responses focused on the key terms of the question such as 'striking', 'powerful', 'disturbing' or 'entertaining', regularly referencing these terms in their responses.

Making a brief plan is a good idea to help candidates to select relevant material for inclusion, and to help them to remain focused on the question. It is helpful to annotate a passage before attempting the question.

Briefly setting the passage in context at the start of the response is important in a passage-based questions and was a feature of successful responses, demonstrating understanding of the structure of the text. Working chronologically through the passage rather than starting in the middle is essential to ensure thorough coverage of the passage. The response should consider the key terms in the question, the events of the given moment and an exploration of the writer's methods in conveying his or her intentions to the audience, including exploration of language and staging effects. Brief well-selected references should be analysed fully.



The strongest answers to discursive questions chose a range of material from the text as a whole and used well-chosen, concise references to support points: references should be analysed fully.

Literary techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing and their effect on the audience, were often explored successfully, with support and analysis. However, many responses tended to point out such techniques with no exploration of their effects. Similarly, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created, seems unproductive.

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

Only a few rubric infringements were seen, where candidates answered two passage-based questions rather than the requirement of one passage-based and one discursive question. In this case, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

##### **Question 1**

- (a) More successful responses were able to explore the racial tension of the time, linking it to Godfrey's initial hesitancy to engage with Gerte for fear of finding himself in 'trouble'. There was some understanding that the setting of the play not long after World War 2 is significant to his reaction to Gerte as she is German. However, the majority failed to recognise that many of Godfrey's actions are because of his colour and that Gerte has not appreciated the situation. Some candidates discussed Godfrey's remark about Gerte being the '*first German I seen that ain't in a newsreel*' and thus were able to possibly link this to Godfrey's initial wariness towards her.

Several weaker responses did not contextualise the passage and showed little or no awareness of events or characters in the wider play, as if the passage had been approached as an unseen text.

There was some response to the staging, but few responses fully appreciated the final stage directions, and the focus was often more on Godfrey than on why this is a striking introduction to Gerte. Few candidates commented that both characters are trying to escape from something. Some candidates mentioned the cookies but did not understand their significance, the fact that Gerte is very hungry, which is why she greedily stuffs the cookie in her mouth.

- (b) The obvious points about Lily – her Communist views, her challenge to racism, her drinking, her influence on Ernestine – were identified but many other points such as her previous involvement with Godfrey, her contempt for his religious ideas, her response to Gerte, that she is a freeloader – were ignored. Candidates were often positive about Lily being strong-willed and confident in what she stands for: non-conformist, eccentric and unabashed. They were able to identify how Lily is not ashamed to show her black identity which is very much a part of who she is, helping to make her more deserving of admiration. Likewise, there was comment on how she will not allow society to shame her for being black, focusing on her belief that everyone is equal. A few responses referred to her remarks about Gerte and how these could, ironically, be considered racist. Candidates were able to comment on Lily's ideals being appealing to Ernestine and how she acts as a catalyst for her to develop her aspirations.

There was some understanding of Lily's good intentions and of how they are affected by her drunkenness. Her physical appearance was commented on and the idea that she loves to dress smartly as she believes it confuses and annoys white people.

Some responses noted her deep-rooted loneliness beneath the brash facade and how she feels rejected by Godfrey, but use of the text was minimal and attempts to comment on the language were often limited. Responses were often unable to find supporting evidence from the text and instead tended to describe Lily's character.

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

**Question 2**

- (a) Successful responses contextualised the passage and were aware that at this point Pilkings does not know that the burden carried by the women is Olunde's body. The powerful nature of Olunde's death and the disturbing revelation of his body were discussed, with particular focus on how the revelation of the '*burden*' is delayed, and the dramatic impact of this. They understood the deeper implications of honour, ritual suicide and the idea of cultural identity.

Some responses understood the symbolic meaning of the chains as something that literally and figuratively prevent Elesin from fulfilling his duty of the suicide ritual and this was connected to the theme of slavery. Elesin has enjoyed living in the present plane of existence and is reluctant to let it go which chains him down. Likewise, the irony of the chains preventing him from harming himself, being the cause of his death was understood. Stage directions proved useful in showing the determination of Elesin's actions in strangling himself, with candidates being able to comment on the adjectives '*swift*' and '*decisive*' which are used to powerfully describe his actions. Overall, candidates expressed real personal engagement with the horror of this moment.

The themes of honour and duty were outlined and Elesin's guilt and shame were understood and supported and his '*rock-still*' stance was often explored, engaging with the drama on stage.

The clash between Iyalojah and Pilkings was discussed, showing understanding that at this point, Iyalojah holds the power. Her scream and instruction to Pilkings to, '*Let him alone!*' were used to illustrate this power as well as her anger. Insightful responses commented on Iyaloja's indifference and cynicism to Elesin's death contrasting it to the horror of Pilkings witnessing such a scene and his attempts to revive Elesin. This gave candidates the opportunity to focus on the deeply rooted traditions of the Yoruba people and how they must be adhered to despite what the 'educated' British may think. The impact of colonisation on the Yorubans is voiced powerfully by Iyaloja. There were some sound observations of her use of questioning, blaming the colonists and their meddling resulting in the discordance and impacting the future of her people. The consequences of Pilkings' interference were discussed with candidates understanding that due to Pilkings' interference, two deaths have been caused instead of his intention which was to prevent one death.

In weaker responses, themes of honour and duty as well as Elesin's shame and guilt were often understood but not fully supported. There was some misunderstanding about Olunde's body being rolled in the mat and there was little reference to the language of the passage.

Few candidates mentioned the role of the bride who performs the ritual of closing Elesin's eyes in keeping with the honour and duty of the Yoruba people, her pregnancy giving hope for the future.

- (b) This was a less popular question. Stronger responses understood that the question offered the chance to debate whether or not Jane Pilkings is a likeable character, taking one side or giving a sense of balance. Many candidates were able to reference Jane's sensitivity in attempting to understand other cultures in contrast to her husband's arrogant dismissal of them, but that this sensitivity only goes so far. Likewise, there was relevant evidence of her attempting to moderate Simon's behaviour by reminding him of his mistakes when she sees Amusa's look of shock and horror when they wear the Egungun costume as fancy dress. However, there is evidence of her sense of superiority when she refers to Amusa as a '*pagan*'. There was clear understanding of her insensitivity and hypocrisy in her conversation with Olunde when she assumes that he will no longer wish to follow traditional customs on his return home, having spent time in Europe, which further enhances her prejudice. Likewise, her fixed mindset was evidenced when rejecting Olunde's argument, making no attempt to understand his point of view. Her hypocrisy about '*mass suicide*' is shown and she calls him '*barbaric*' and '*a savage*'. Strong responses focused on the disrespect of the Pilkings' for the Egungun and the links to the wider play, expanding the debate from Jane to the British in general.

Weaker responses often seemed to feel obliged to present Jane as likeable and many struggled to do this successfully. Some responses attempted to contrast Jane with Iyalojah, but with limited success. Many responses became repetitive on the theme of cultural insensitivity and only a few used the quote '*You're just a savage like all the rest*', to demonstrate her attitude towards Olunde and the Yoruba people.

**TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

**Question 3**

- (a) This was a very popular text and question and many candidates showed clear engagement with the text and how the scene is made disturbing, producing interesting and sustained responses. There was apt coverage of Blanche being taken away and how the scene with its animalistic depictions contributes to the unsettling atmosphere.

The most successful responses contextualised the passage as following Stanley's rape of Blanche, exploring her subsequent breakdown and the disturbing fact that no-one believes her about the rape. Stella's guilt was discussed, and the way that she feels disturbed by what she has done to Blanche was explored. Stronger personal responses argued that she may fear the consequences for her own life of believing Blanche's claim that Stanley raped her, even though deep down, she probably does believe it. The out-of-character behaviour of Mitch was explored, as well as the hysteria of Blanche and the contrasting behaviour of the Doctor and the Matron. The aggressive and sexual behaviour of Stanley was also highlighted.

At this point Stanley is determined to remove Blanche from his household rather than try to help her and shows excitement at the prospect of removing her. This was referenced in his running and exclamations- '*Hey! Hey! Doctor!*' Successful responses identified Stanley's determined nature and his brutality to achieve his own goals, '*he pushes him aside*'. These responses were also able to identify the change in Mitch's behaviour and to focus on the language used to express this, '*he lunges and strikes at Stanley*', but they understood that his actions pose no threat to Stanley, who is only focused on getting the doctor to take Blanche away so that he can resume his old life. Indeed, candidates understood that although some of the characters may feel sympathy for Blanche, most of them remain quiet as they fear the reprisals from Stanley if they speak up.

The strongest responses engaged fully with the drama onstage-the tension, movement and effects. Details such as the repeated reference to '*sobbing*,' and stage directions such as '*Blanche turns wildly*' and '*the inhuman cries and noises die out*', were referenced and analysed to successfully illustrate the disturbing nature of the passage. The Matron's comment that, '*These fingernails have to be trimmed*', was discussed as evidence that Blanche no longer has control over her appearance, which was previously so important to her.

Successful responses also focused on Blanche's words '*the kindness of strangers*' and their irony. Blanche's trust in the Doctor who has come to take her to the asylum and the disturbing way that no-one intervenes was examined. Some candidates showed insight by discussing how the Doctor is more disturbing than the Matron, despite her acting as the dominant force, in that he is sinister in his pretence of being kind, only in order to control Blanche's behaviour. Blanche's response to the doctor links to her past relationships with men and how she can no longer distinguish between being coaxed and tricked; the doctor, in effect, leading her to her demise. Those candidates who considered the stage directions, '*desperate pleading*' on the part of Blanche showed further understanding of her state of mind and vulnerability.

Some candidates commented on the stage directions, '*as if she was blind*' suggesting that Blanche is already 'blind' to reality.

The way that Stella's baby is handed to her as a symbol of her future without Blanche was understood, and there was some comment that the blue blanket indicating a boy, disturbingly foreshadows another Stanley.

Stella's '*luxurious*' sobbing and also the disturbing inappropriateness of Stanley's sensual soothing of his distraught wife as '*his fingers find the opening of her blouse*', and how this adds to the disturbing nature of the passage, were explored. One candidate commented perceptively that, 'Stanley hopes that Stella's sexual pleasure will make her stay with him, and the most disturbing part is that it does'. Many candidates were able to consider how his determination to be rid of Blanche and his villainous victory make the scene disturbing.

Less successful responses did not mention the important context point that Stanley has raped Blanche and did not cover the passage thoroughly. These responses tended to assume that Blanche understands and is accepting her fate, being realistic and leaving fantasy behind.

Occasionally responses misunderstood Stanley's words about Mitch – 'this *bone-headed cry-baby*,' as referring to Stanley and Stella's baby. There was much comment on the idea of it being a male-dominated society and weaker responses spent much time discussing this.

Weaker responses also missed important moments of staging and quite a few began with Blanche and almost ignored the behaviour of other characters. Few candidates mentioned '*the jacket*' or understood its meaning. However, many candidates obviously enjoyed the play and the passage and were able to respond positively to it though some seemed uncertain about which characters actually know about Stanley's rape of Blanche.

- (b) The strongest responses were able to support their ideas with appropriate references ranging throughout the play. They recognised the significant differences between Blanche and Stella especially regarding men and, in particular, with reference to Stanley. They considered the difference between Blanche's delusional view of life and Stella's more realistic attitude and many recognised that Blanche is more outspoken than Stella. Some candidates noted that Blanche represents the fading Old South and, as a Southern Belle, is unable to cope with its falling decay and the rise of the New America. In contrast, Stella has adapted to her new life with Stanley in New Orleans.

Successful responses referred to how Blanche holds Stella's working-class environment in contempt, making derogatory comments not only about her living conditions, but also about her husband and in so doing emasculating him. In contrast Stella is more practical in accepting her new life, something that Blanche cannot comprehend. Unlike her sister, Blanche stands up to Stanley. There was some interesting comment made on how the sisters cope with their reality. Blanche fabricates lies to protect herself whereas Stella is shown to prefer realism. However, when Stella is abused by her husband, she excuses his behaviour '*he didn't know what he was doing*', and in so doing, fabricates a different reality, just as her sister has done. Likewise, she refuses to accept the reality of the situation of Stanley raping her sister. There was much comment on the patriarchal society Stella resides in and her dependence and submissiveness to Stanley to protect both the welfare of herself and her new baby. She needs to believe in her husband. Like her sister, she has a dependence on men.

Successful responses focused on language to illustrate the difference between the quiet, straightforward Stella and dramatic, flighty Blanche. Blanche's lengthy speech about Belle Reve was cited as an example, with Stella staying silent throughout.

The characters' appearance was contrasted, with candidates often focusing on Blanche being '*daintily dressed in a white suit*'. Whereas Blanche avoids the light, Stella is confident in her appearance despite Blanche's criticism of the stained clothing she wears. There was focus on past events such as Blanche's husband committing suicide and the loss of Belle Reve and the impact these events have on Blanche, and her attempt to cling to 'old America', as opposed to Stella moving on. These responses explored the sisters' dramatically contrasting situations at the end of the play, with Stella choosing her husband and baby and Blanche reliant on the ironic '*comfort of strangers*', as she is taken away to an asylum.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the contrasting characters but were often imbalanced, with much focus on Blanche and little on Stella. The appearance of the sisters was contrasted, although candidates often struggled to find relevant textual support. These responses were often lacking in precise textual support, were narrow in range and tended to drift into narrative. Some engagement with and understanding of the two characters was nevertheless evident.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

### **Question 4**

- (a) Candidates generally engaged well with this passage, providing the context that Theseus has found the lovers asleep while out hunting, after Puck has anointed Lysander's eyes with the love potion so that his love for Hermia will return. Many responses showed a genuine sense of satisfaction that Egeus is overruled by Theseus, meaning that Hermia and Lysander can marry. Similarly, candidates expressed satisfaction that Helena, after all her suffering, has found love. There was also an awareness of the tension at the start of the passage, a sense of relief that all three storylines are resolved and happiness that there will be three weddings.

Stronger responses interpreted the ending as partially unsatisfactory and unjust, indicating a darker tone, as Demetrius remains under the effects of the love potion and will never return to his senses. They expressed a sense of sadness and an awareness that the audience may feel 'moral qualms', because his love for Helena is 'manufactured' and he will never truly know who he chose as his true love.

Demetrius's language in, '*melted as the snow*', was often explored successfully, as was '*Now I do wish it, love it, long for it.*' There was some focus on the use of iambic pentameter, not always successfully explored, and on how Lysander is interrupted by Egeus, showing his contempt.

Many weaker responses did not progress beyond the idea of this passage showing a happy ending for the lovers. There was little coverage of Theseus's entrance at the beginning of the passage in weaker responses, with context rarely provided, and some misunderstanding of Egeus's '*defeated...me of my consent*', with some believing that he has been persuaded to allow Hermia to marry Lysander rather than been overruled by Theseus. Understanding of the language was not completely secure, with some examples being Theseus's words, '*overbear your will*', and '*eternally be knit*'. Many candidates did not show understanding that Demetrius is still under the effects of the spell.

Some responses became preoccupied by the theme of patriarchy, believing that Theseus's ruling breaks the patriarchy, when he is in fact part of the same. In general, coverage of the passage lacked thoroughness.

- (b) Candidates generally chose two relevant moments, and set them in context, often focusing on Titania falling in love with Bottom as an ass, the Mechanicals' rehearsals and the arguments between the lovers in the wood. Strong responses analysed and contextualised the moments and the language and were able to justify what they found entertaining about them. The text was explored carefully and provided some insightful responses.

There was some focus on humour through the insults hurled between Hermia and Helena and on the wordplay in Bottom's mistakes. Successful responses were able to discuss the contribution of the chosen moments to the plot, characterisation and themes of the play. Strong responses focused on visual effects, such as the lion or the wall in the Mechanicals' rehearsals or on the conflicts and mistaken identities which make the moments entertaining.

Often the chosen moments of weaker responses were only explored superficially, lacking sufficient depth and supporting detail for high reward. In many responses the second moment was explored in less detail than the first. There was, however, often evidence that candidates genuinely engaged with the humour and drama of the text, despite development of the responses being limited.

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

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was a very popular text and question. Successful responses were able to contextualise the passage as taking place upon Othello's safe arrival in Cyprus after the storm at sea, and his reunion with Desdemona. They showed awareness of the movement onstage, and the intensity of the emotions expressed, engaging with the couple's happiness shown in their public kiss and their loving language, '*O my fair warrior!*' '*My dear Othello*', and '*Honey*', '*my sweet*', as well as Othello's dramatic imagery of '*Olympus-high*'. They explored how this highlights the duplicitous nature of '*honest*' Iago and his maliciousness later on, along with the contrasting portrayals of love as pure and committed, as opposed to lustful and sexual. Iago's description of Desdemona as a sexual being was explored, focusing on his imagery of feeding and appetite and understanding his misogyny. Understanding was also shown by many candidates of Iago's scoffing at Othello's words, illustrating his sardonic and cynical personality alongside this misogyny.

The fact that the celebration is due to Turkish deaths was noted to be disturbing by some candidates. The irony of Othello's words '*our wars are done*', was recognised by stronger responses, and the change in tone which provides a sense of foreboding was explored. Analysis of Iago's metaphorical aside '*I'll set down the pegs that make this music*', was effective in showing the contrast with Othello and Desdemona's harmony, and the use of an aside and its effect, adding

to the dramatic irony, was successfully discussed. The change from verse to prose was often pointed out and stronger responses discussed the significance of this language point. Iago's language describing Othello as a '*devil*', and '*telling fantastical lies*', was referenced as evidence of how the passage is made disturbing, and the dramatic irony was understood.

Less successful responses made little reference to the start of the passage with Othello and Desdemona's greeting, while some interpreted the expression of their love as 'over-the-top' and therefore fake. These responses tended to focus mainly on Iago's exchange with Roderigo, but there was much misunderstanding of the line, '*Desdemona is directly in love with him*', interpreting this as Iago telling Roderigo that she is in love with Othello, not Cassio. There was often no reference to Cassio's role in the plot at all. Overall understanding of what is happening in the passage was nevertheless shown.

- (b) Successful responses demonstrated thorough knowledge of the text and were able to select and use many appropriate quotations from both Iago and Emilia. They recognised that Emilia, who might have once loved Iago, now acts out of a sense of duty. They included detailed quotations from the dock-side scene where Emilia, Iago and Desdemona are discussing women in general and also examined the final deadly confrontation between Iago and Emilia. There was valid comment on how Iago disrespects and slanders women throughout the play, often reducing them to their sexual worth. Candidates who made reference to his unfounded suspicions of Emilia being unfaithful with Othello began exploring the relationship in greater detail. They understood that he does not care about his wife until he believes that she has been unfaithful, and treats her as a possession, not to be shared with anyone else. They also showed awareness of Emilia's jaded perspective on faithfulness as opposed to Desdemona's shock that any wife would consider being unfaithful. They gave an overview of Iago's misogyny and his derogatory comments about women throughout the play, in general and specifically about Emilia. They explored his revenge plot and understood Emilia's unwitting part in furthering this plot. These responses contrasted the couple and their jaded relationship with the loving, romantic relationship of Othello and Desdemona.

Textual references such as '*a foolish wife*' explored what Iago thinks of Emilia, only praising her as '*a good wench*' when she does his bidding and gives him the handkerchief. His cynical attitude towards women and love was demonstrated here.

Emilia's horror upon discovering her husband's role in Desdemona's death was explored and her shocked repetition of '*my husband*', was often given as an example of this. Her willingness to announce Iago's guilt was commented on, and some candidates expressed satisfaction that she finally speaks out against her manipulative husband. Others noted that the only time she ever stands up to Iago results in her death, Iago killing her in order to silence her.

Weaker responses made little reference to the text and language. They often claimed that Emilia is complicit in Iago's plot, and many did not mention that she is murdered by her husband. These responses often lacked precise textual support. Most commented on the handkerchief but many often drifted into narrative on this subject and wasted valuable examination time writing about the role of women in Elizabethan or Jacobean society. Many candidates became sidetracked by Iago and his machinations and wrote little about Emilia.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/31</b> <b>Drama (Open Text)</b></p>
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## Key messages

- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Introductions with lengthy comments on the writer's life, plot summaries, or listing of writer's techniques to be addressed, are unproductive ways to begin an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- Commenting on quotations and punctuation, chosen at random, without exploring the context and making a link to the question, is unlikely to achieve reward.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

## General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set texts and an engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, were aware of the text as performance and commented on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved. It was pleasing to see that a new set text, *A Streetcar Named Desire* was a popular choice, along with the established set text, *Othello*. There were far fewer responses seen to *Death and the King's Horseman* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Centres are reminded that *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, will be replaced on the syllabus in 2025 by Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney.

Some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, or plot summaries, before referring to the question. In some cases, the actual terms of the chosen question were completely missed resulting in a retelling of the plot or passage. With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. There is no requirement for them to write a thesis statement or to summarise the plot before answering the specific question. In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage, is a helpful way to start an answer. It is also helpful for candidates to write a sentence or two, referencing the question, and giving a brief overview of the key points before going on to develop them in the main body of the essay. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the passage, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points may have been missed. Textual references which were selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text. Listing literary features as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'powerful' or 'shocking', is also an unproductive way to start a response. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill; simply working through a passage or the text, without focus on the terms of the question, is unlikely to achieve high reward.

An awareness that these texts are written to be performed on stage informed the most successful answers. These responses looked at the text from an audience perspective and commented on authors' intentions in regard to the audience and commented in detail on the dramatic impact created. They were aware that, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation or alliteration in the stage directions, rather than the tone and mood created, is unproductive. Many candidates referred to 'paragraphs', 'chapters' and the 'reader' when discussing drama. It would be useful to encourage the use of 'speech', 'scene' and 'audience' in practice answers. Even when candidates have not seen a performance of the play, it is important to consider the visual impact of characters' appearance and interaction on stage.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of material from the whole text, supporting points with quotation or very specific textual reference. The ability to integrate brief, well-selected

reference to the text is a key discriminator as indicated in the Level Descriptors. Candidates who memorise direct quotations are likely to be better prepared to analyse the ways in which writers achieve their effects (AO3). However, these should be fully explored rather than remain inert or used to support a narrative approach. Similarly, beginning a paragraph with a reference or quotation rather than supporting a point does little to develop an argument effectively.

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.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly and to avoid numerous crossings out which often resulted in a loss of clarity in expression.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

##### **Question 1**

- (a) The most successful responses contextualised the extract and clarified that Ernestine was reading aloud Father Divine's long-awaited letter and that these views are not her own. Some answers responded very well to the questionable beliefs and tactics of the letter, the capitalised imperatives and grand claims of a '*direct line of communication*' with God, as well as the comic anti-climax of the letter's spiritual tone being undermined by the cynical and manipulative request for money: '*I know you won't let us starve*'. Some answers briefly referenced the disappointing outcome of the Holy Communion Banquet which confirms the extract's suggestion of Father Divine's sham care for followers. Brief reference to the significance of the extract in the wider play enables candidates to demonstrate understanding of deeper implications.

Some commented on Godfrey's personal and circumstantial susceptibility to Father Divine's cult, contextualising his devotion and the [*heavenly daze*] that prevents him seeing clearly. They evidenced and explored the contrast between Godfrey's earnest piety deriving from Father Divine's instruction and the girls' hopes and dreams of a movie outing or popularity with boys. Most candidates were able to draw out the humour provided by Ermina's visual and verbal reaction of horror to her new name although fewer engaged with the poignant comment from Ernestine revealing her developing sense of personal identity as '*a Crump*' and how this relates to the wider play's narrative trajectory. The contrast between the girls' responses, one a blunt rejection, '*Not me*', and the other shared only with the audience, was also considered entertaining, adding depth to characterisation. Stronger answers recognised the stage direction of Godfrey 'trying on' his new name to support the theme of an imposed identity and related this effectively to Ernestine's direct address to the audience and her concern over whether he is '*speaking for himself or Father Divine*'. Stronger responses considered how Nottage dramatises Godfrey's promise of a '*celebration*', only to provide an anti-climax and reversal in the final lines where Ernestine's hope of a united family event is overturned, seeing this moment as both 'serious' and 'entertaining'.

Weaker responses recognised the importance of Father Divine to Godfrey and broadly identified the serious issues of racial prejudice and inequality embodied in the letter, although with limited understanding of Father Divine's words. Most commented on the capitalisation of words and exclamations within the letter and some of the stage directions, for example '*[sucks her teeth]*' and '*[horrified]*' to demonstrate some understanding of dramatic effects, although many interpreted the capitals as Ernestine simply shouting rather than her reflecting the assertive style of the New Day publication. Many believed that these were Ernestine's views and the capitals reflected her own passion for the messages. Many did not reach the final lines of the extract and the anti-climax or failed to recognise that Ernestine's hope of a celebration is actually dashed. Some candidates attempted to identify individual elements in the extract which were simultaneously entertaining and serious, which led to an unduly restrictive scope. When questions pose two areas of focus, it is not necessary to cover them equally or view them as combined.

- (b) Too few responses for comment.



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

**Question 2**

- (a) Many candidates answering this question struggled with the language of the passage although their general knowledge of the play and of Elesin's later actions was evident. Most were able to comment on Elesin's arrogance and overconfidence with a little textual support and the best responses identified the irony of these characteristics in the light of later events in the play, particularly his belief in being '*master of [his] fate*'. The stronger responses made reference to the questions of the women and the bold responses from Elesin to support this reading of the character's confidence. The best response moved beyond this single point and considered the Praise Singer's description of Elesin as a '*rock*' and a '*gay thoroughbred whose stride disdains to falter*' where the character's importance in the community, and the proleptic irony of these descriptions, was made clear. This point was developed and supported by the women's description of Elesin as privileged, '*the very land was yours*', and that Elesin's repetition of '*mine*' reflects both his status and forewarns of his ultimate reluctance to relinquish his greedy hold on life.

However, the majority struggled to engage effectively with the language, not making reference to the Not-I bird, any of Elesin's opening comments or the vivid description throughout. None made reference to Elesin's description of his relationship with his '*master*', his attitude to death or his '*welcome*' to the Not-I bird. Weaker responses had very little textual support and were also unclear of the context of the moment. They often attempted to introduce other information about the characters to substitute for consideration of the material in this extract.

- (b) The majority of responses took the 'To what extent ...' stem of the question as a cue to say they agreed to a great extent with the assertion and that they strongly disliked the British characters. Most were able to point to examples of the British characters' racism, though relatively few explored the tragic outcome of Pilkings' prevention of Elesin's suicide for Olunde or indeed the potential destruction of Yoruban society. Very few considered the representation of the British beyond the Pilkings.

The strongest answers explored the British characters' generally dismissive attitudes and lack of comprehension of Yoruban culture, giving examples such as the sacrilegious Egungun dress for the Residency Ball and Pilkings' attempt to prevent Elesin's ritual death. The best answers briefly considered when Pilkings and his wife were motivated by better moral intentions, for example in their support of Olunde, although a balanced argument was not obligatory and candidates were free to take up the position of their choice. Most candidates recognised Pilkings' position as illustrative of the colonial power Soyinka is critiquing. They cited Pilkings' dismissive and insulting language and his patronising treatment of Amusa and Joseph to support ideas of the English characters' narrow-minded belief in the superiority of western culture. The '*disbelief*' and '*mute*' reaction of Amusa to the Egungun, Pilkings' bullying tone, and his dismissal of Amusa's concerns as '*rubbish*', were effectively employed as specific examples of the British characters' lack of understanding, alongside their self-seeking desire for '*first prize*' and to pander to '*His Highness*' rather than grasp the importance of the cultural issue at hand.

Isolated responses distinguished between Simon and Jane and credited the latter with attempting to curb Simon's insulting language and having at least some intellectual curiosity. Some stronger answers cited the scene with Jane Pilkings and Olunde and how this conversation reveals her inability to understand Olunde's arguments regarding self-sacrifice and make the connection with her own culture, eliciting an unfavourable response from audiences. Such responses had memorised quotations or specific references to draw upon to support an argument that Soyinka is positioning audiences to disapprove of the English characters.

Weaker answers focused on one moment only, usually Scene 2 with the Engungun '*costumes*', with very few answers referencing later scenes of the play. All candidates could offer a personal response to the question but the sparse textual reference limited reward for many answers and meant that most stayed at a basic level.

**TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

**Question 3**

- (a) All candidates found this to be an accessible question and even weaker responses engaged and could offer some comment on Blanche's characterisation and show some knowledge of the wider play, often discussing her nervousness and anxiety. Most answers could recognise Blanche's snobbery, her inability to face the light and her desperate escape in drink, these being the three areas that featured in most responses.

Stronger candidates were able to range widely across the extract and also explore what the extract revealed about the sisters' relationship, contrasting Blanche's dramatic delusional vanity with Stella's quiet and restrained sincerity. They were able to engage with details of language and stagecraft, recognising Blanche's domination of the discourse, her repetitive, exclamatory speech and agitation, alongside Stella's comparative reserve, measured speech and action '*[carefully pouring]*'. Stronger responses considered implications for the wider play and how Stella's compliance and limited resistance to Blanche's domination prepares the audience for her submission to Stanley's forceful nature. They could offer a nuanced analysis of the sisters' relationship and its combination of closeness and friction. The more successful answers could contextualise Blanche's horror at the apartment and recognise the irony of her criticism given her straitened circumstances. When candidates recognised the hesitancy in mentioning Stanley, some interpreted this as revealing the gap in the sisters' recent history or Blanche's disapproval, and considered how this anticipates the looming menace of Stanley once he returns from his masculine sport. There was understanding of Blanche's denials and evasions regarding her drinking and her reasons for leaving her post, with the strongest answers closely unpicking how Blanche's speeches intimate that she is being guarded, for example the final broken line suggesting she is unwilling to be completely frank about why her '*nerves broke*'.

In terms of anticipating both later events and the subsequent revelations about Blanche's past, stronger answers were able to strike a balance and determine motifs, such as the light, which figure significantly through the play, but also consider the experience of audiences viewing this play for the first time, the impressions created, tensions detected and suspicions aroused. Those who considered contextual elements and that Blanche had already helped herself to a drink, could comment that the audience has been placed in a privileged position and alerted to her propensity for deception.

Less successful answers focused only on the evidence of Blanche's drinking and nervousness, making a judgement of her being an alcoholic and closing off any further discussion, often claiming that this causes her downfall. Some candidates wrote lengthy disquisitions on Blanche's name or the symbolism of 'Stella for Star' at the expense of a wider range of material. Prepared socio-historical material on 'The New America versus the Old South' featured in many answers but was sometimes unhelpful if not related to the extract itself. Weaker responses tended to focus largely on the stage directions and exclamatory speech but with more limited focus on what the characters actually say. Such responses often lapsed into narrative, attempting to show understanding of Blanche's back-story but with insufficient focus on the question of how this moment is 'revealing'.

- (b) Stronger answers explored Stanley's dramatic physicality, for example: bringing home the pack of meat, his aggressive and dominating alpha male behaviour at the poker game and the shock of the rape scene. The best could evidence this precisely with stage direction for example '*[he charges]*' or Blanche '*[sinks to her knees]*' as if taken down by a stronger opponent. It was useful for candidates to contextualise Blanche's criticisms of Stanley as bestial and illuminate the basis of her objections. Answers which discussed toxic masculinity and Stanley's domination, over both his territory and his mate, engaged well with themes of the play and considered character motivation clearly. Several answers recognised that both Stella and Blanche comment on Stanley's behaviour and manners, seeing him as a '*different species*', perhaps underpinned by their notions of Southern gentlemen, and that stage directions such as Stanley as a '*richly feathered male bird among hens*' illuminate his relationship with Stella where poor behaviour is excused on the basis of his sexual prowess. They related this description to Stanley's vibrant clothing, recognising Williams' use of expressionistic dramatic effects. Many candidates referenced 'plastic theatre' but only the stronger ones clarified how costumes, effects such as jungle noises and the combative nature of the poker game could be seen as relevant to this question. Some strong answers discussed Stanley's more vulnerable moments, for example when he apologises and expresses his love to Stella, sobbing when he thinks she has left him. Very few gave a balanced argument but those that did so cited his

history as a master sergeant or considered the irony of Blanche's accusations given some of her own flaws. Stronger answers referenced how Stanley's dominance and Blanche's contesting his position creates some of the most dramatic scenes of the play, and that Stanley overhearing Blanche's damning criticism of him as '*subhuman*' creates great tension and propels his cruel actions. They were able to support their argument with reference to such specific textual details and relevant quotations.

Weaker responses saw the question as an invitation to simply provide a character assassination and adduce any of Stanley's random actions to animal behaviour, even throwing the radio out of the window, with limited reference to context or Williams' ideas, meaning that deeper implications were not elicited. Some less successful responses provided a character study but with limited relation to the play's themes or how audiences are persuaded to adopt this view. In some narrative based responses, knowledge seemed to be derived from cinema versions of the play rather than the written text.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) All those choosing this question showed clear engagement with the question and understood that Bottom's ebullience creates comical effects. Nearly all responses explored his exaggerated beliefs about his own acting ability, with some textual support. Some of the better responses commented that the other mechanicals do not correct his efforts, perhaps accepting him as the dominant member of the group or revealing their own ignorance that his ideas are absurd, whilst others discussed the difficulties of Quince in trying to keep him under control.

The best responses could support their view of the character with quotations illustrating the nature of his boasts and pinpointed mistakes and malapropisms. Some recognised the conflation of '*sitting dove*' and '*sucking lamb*', the mispronunciation of Thisby, Phoebus and Hercules, the incongruity of '*roar*' with '*nightingale*', the oxymoronic '*monstrous little*' and comic repetition of '*let me*'. The very best commented on Bottom's vanity in anticipating Theseus' rapturous reception and even mimicking his voice. They contextualised the scene, understanding where the play will be performed and that it is actually a tragedy being reduced to a comedy. Some demonstrated wider textual knowledge and recognised that the scene anticipates Bottom's elevated status in the scene with Titania, where he again assumes a supposedly dignified role but with humorous effects, or that the extract prepares us for the mechanicals' final entertaining performance, giving an early flavour of this comic climax.

The weaker answers stayed very much at the surface of the text and recognised Bottom's enthusiasm and eagerness to play all parts but with limited engagement with the language and without comment on the contribution of the other players. Some candidates, attempting to explore language, made confusing and unproductive references to Bottom's name, relating it to 'ass'.

- (b) Fewer responses to this question were seen but all engaged with the character and recognised the enjoyment that Puck brings to audiences. The most successful answers ranged across Puck's contribution to the play and did not narrow their focus on one aspect or particular scene. All were able to identify Puck's identity as Oberon's servant, his mischievous nature, enjoyment of tricks and magical powers although comments were often descriptive, without precise support and detail.

Stronger answers explored how Puck gives Bottom the head of an ass causing Titania to fall in love with him and the comically dramatic results that ensue, announced with delight to Oberon: '*my mistress with a monster is in love*'. They recognised that this provides much visual humour on stage. They commented on the chaos caused by the error in anointing the wrong '*Athenian*' and some referenced his unabashed enjoyment of the mistake. The best included the introduction to the character and how the dialogue with Fairy outlines many of his characteristics and supernatural powers, preparing the audience for the mayhem to follow. They commented that this prepares the audience for Puck's free, unruly spirit, beyond being subject to Oberon's service. He operates under his own volition, choosing to create mayhem with the ass's head and thus having huge dramatic impact as his actions are unpredictable and wayward. They also pointed out that he resolves all the chaos he has wrought in accordance with the genre conventions of comedy. The best answer referenced Puck breaking the fourth wall in the epilogue, and the dramatic impact this has on audiences, engaging directly with the character and being included in the '*dream*' experience.

Weaker responses tended to narrate the events of the play relevant to the character, focused on one event and lacked precise textual detail. Consideration of language demonstrating Puck's distinctive voice and the singular impact he has within the play was lacking in these responses.

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

### **Question 5**

- (a) Successful answers discussed the strength of Othello's love for Desdemona and how striking it was, linking to its deeper implications and significance in the wider play. Othello's calmness and confidence were widely recognised as striking features of his first appearance and more developed answers commented on his defusing the threat posed by Brabantio in a dignified manner, retaining politeness in his terms of address, '*good signior*', even in the face of accusations of being a '*thief*'. One response discussed the contrast between the underhand tactics of Iago, agitating Othello with threats of Brabantio's power and urging him to retreat inside, with Othello's openness and clipped certainty in '*Not I; I must be found*'. Stronger responses recognised the command Othello demonstrates through his interactions with the various characters who address him with urgency or violence, whilst he holds his ground. There was a range of views regarding Othello's claim that his '*services*' for Venice would '*out-tongue*' Brabantio's accusations, some interpreting this as justified military pride and simple confidence in his stature or alternatively the hubris that helps to orchestrate his downfall. Most argued that his rhetoric and vocabulary presents him as poetic and dignified, the triplet '*My parts, my title, and my perfect soul*' signifying confidence and lack of guilt, '*title*' referring to him being Desdemona's husband or his military rank. Alternatively, other valid responses viewed this as indicative of arrogance although candidates rarely noted that Othello does not believe that '*boasting is an honour*' and is making these declarations to Iago alone.

The contributions of Cassio, Iago and Brabantio were considered fruitfully in the stronger responses. Cassio's urgent news that Othello is '*hotly called for*' '*even on the instant*' and that '*three several quests*' have sought him establish Othello as a vital, valued figure in Venice. Stronger answers briefly considered that Othello confiding in Iago could be seen as the first signifier of his misplaced trust. This was supported by the audience's recognition of the dramatic irony of Iago's oath '*By Janus*' and that they witness Iago's denigrating description of Othello's marriage, '*he hath boarded a land carrack*', delivered '*behind Othello's back*'. However, those responses which interpreted the character as wholly arrogant, complacent, gullible or flawed lacked nuance and dismissed this introduction to Othello's evident qualities which strikingly establish the hero at his height. Stronger answers recognised the significance of this first impression in the wider play, setting up the tragedy to come, where the calm, rational and measured character established here will be undermined, resulting in him losing both Desdemona and his idea of himself.

It was very helpful for candidates to consider the context of this scene and how Othello strikingly contrasts the image previously established by Iago, Roderigo and Brabantio. However, many heavily drifted from this extract and focused on the first scene and its presentation of racist attitudes to Othello, which was relevant but often meant salient material from Act 1 Scene 2 was skipped over. Most candidates referenced the theme of racial prejudice and whilst stronger answers discussed the attitudes of the characters briefly, before linking them to the scene, the weaker responses diverged into tangential and lengthy explorations of Jacobean attitudes to race or the racist insults from Scene 1 at the expense of the language here.

Weaker answers generally noted individual characteristics of Othello in the scene, such as his bravery, self-confidence or love for Desdemona, but looked only at Othello's speech and not the contributions of Cassio, Iago, Brabantio. Discussion of language and the dramatic effects of the threat of violence tended not to feature in the weaker responses. There was a noticeable tendency in a small number of responses for literary terms such as '*hamartia*' and '*megalopsychia*' to be used which were more often than not unhelpful when not explored clearly.

- (b) There was a wealth of material to draw from and the brief of the question invited a personal response but necessitated a focus on how Shakespeare's portrayal prompts that response. All commented on the character's duplicity and his manipulative nature. Most considered Iago's motivation and the strongest answers explored his claims of jealousy and revenge at being passed over but also recognised the more sinister evidence of an evil nature in Iago's cynical desire to humiliate and destroy others. Such answers considered the sympathy the audience may initially feel and contrasted this with antipathy and horror as the play progresses. More developed answers

considered how Iago builds a relationship with the audience, as well as with the characters, and the importance of soliloquies in affording a close view of his 'true' self and his candid reductive view of others as '*snipes*' or '*asses*'.

Many answers responded to Iago's ill-treatment of Emilia and that Shakespeare positions audiences to feel anger at his misogyny, evident also in his seemingly joking comments about women at the quayside and his pretence of sympathising with Desdemona when orchestrating her murder. The best answers analysed the diabolic imagery, his crude view of sexuality and his cynical view of love, loyalty and humanity as revealed in the language choices Shakespeare employs.

The strongest were able to discuss the audience's growing sense of frustration at being witness to Iago's villainy and their simultaneous fascination with his success at manipulating all around him, perhaps even inviting some admiration at Iago's cleverness and his ability to disguise his duplicity effectively. Again, close reference to his manipulative skills was a marker of the most successful responses, for example his ability to 're-enact' Cassio's sleep-talking, to tantalise Othello with hints or '*trifles light as air*', to stage-manage events and to shrewdly and accurately predict character's responses such as Cassio being '*as quarrelsome as my young mistress's dog*' when drunk. Comments on the dramatic tension created by his plan falling into place and his eventual exposure providing relief for audiences appeared in some answers although the later events featured in fewer responses, perhaps due to time restraints.

Weaker responses tended to retell the story, provide a character study and itemise the many villainous actions performed by the character and how reprehensible those actions were. These were relevant to the question but did not lead to a well-developed response because they lacked focus on dramatic effects, for example pathos for Iago's victims, the tension created by audience knowledge and how Shakespeare's language positions audiences to be disturbed by this character.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/32</b> <b>Drama (Open Text)</b></p>
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## Key messages

- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Beginning a response with lengthy comments on the writer's life, works and times, giving plot summaries or listing the writer's techniques to be addressed are unproductive ways to start an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- Commenting on quotations and punctuation, chosen at random, without exploring the context and linking it to the question, is unlikely to achieve reward.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

## General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set texts and an engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, were aware of the text as performance and commented on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved. It was pleasing to see that the new set texts, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream* were popular choices though the most popular text, across all components, was *Othello*. There were far fewer responses seen to both *Death and the King's Horseman* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. Centres are reminded that *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* will be replaced on the syllabus in 2025 by Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney.

Some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, or plot summaries, before referring to the question. In some cases, the actual terms of the chosen question were completely missed resulting in a retelling of the plot or passage. With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. There is no requirement for them to write a thesis statement or to retell the plot before answering the specific question. In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage, is a helpful way to start an answer. It is also helpful for candidates to write a sentence or two referencing the question and giving a brief overview of the key points before going on to develop them in the main body of the essay. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the passage, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points may have been missed. Textual references which were selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text. Listing literary features as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'powerful' or 'shocking', is also an unproductive way to start a response. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill; simply working through a passage or the text, without focus on the terms of the question is unlikely to achieve high reward.

An awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage informed the most successful answers. They were aware that, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created seems unproductive. 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 and to outline their own, or propose other audience members', responses.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of material from the whole text, supporting points with quotation or very specific textual reference. The ability to integrate brief, well-selected reference to the text is a key discriminator as indicated in the Level Descriptors. Candidates who memorise direct quotations are likely to be better prepared to analyse the ways in which writers achieve their effects

(AO3). However, these should be fully explored rather than remain inert or used to support a narrative approach. Similarly, beginning a paragraph with a reference or quotation rather than supporting a point does little to develop an argument effectively.

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms that are not helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded; techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. Candidates often refer to punctuation – exclamation marks, capital letters, dashes – while seeking to comment on dialogue but without the context which is unhelpful. These can be relevant, and important, but only if related to the ideas conveyed in the text. Candidates should avoid stating the obvious, for example, the writer uses ‘diction’ or ‘vocabulary’ and should focus on analysing specific language and the effects achieved.

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.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly and to avoid numerous crossings out which often resulted in a loss of clarity in expression.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This was the most popular of the Nottage questions. The most successful answers started by commenting that Ernestine was the narrator in the extract, understanding her breaking the fourth wall and creating a bond between her and the audience, and that this was a major influence in garnering sympathy. They developed a range of points about why the audience feel sympathy for Ernestine and how Nottage achieved this effect. Candidates engaged well with the ideas: Ernestine’s grief over her mother; the significance of her upcoming graduation; the symbolism of the dress; the financial struggles leading to the theft of the lace and Ermina’s leg shaking reflecting the anxiety and guilt; Godfrey’s decision to treat his new wife rather than buy the lace for his daughter and the critical comments from the inebriated Lily with Ernestine’s ‘*Wounded*’ response. Many candidates commented on the importance of Lily as a role model to Ernestine and Ernestine’s maturity which is reflected in the way she challenges her aunt near the end of the extract.

Stronger answers showed understanding of the social context in which Ernestine’s graduation as a young black woman is of particular significance. Contextually, stronger answers effectively integrated analysis of stage directions and symbols, analysing how Nottage employs these elements to deepen audience empathy for Ernestine’s struggles and aspirations. They made links to the historical experiences of the black community at the time and saw Ernestine and Godfrey as representative of a past and more modern approach to social circumstances by the black community, but without lapsing into socio-historical commentary, losing focus on the terms of the question.

Less secure responses tended to focus on the interaction between Ernestine and Lily, ignoring the earlier part of the extract and offered little more than a paraphrase, or summary, with comment. Where used, the impact of quotations chosen was not explored, resulting in a re-telling of the scene or a character study of Lily and her shortcomings and strengths, missing the requirements of the question.

The weakest answers failed to focus on question and extract and instead provided a narrative based approach to events in which Ernestine was involved in the play or wrote a general description of her character. Some only focused on part of the extract, for example Sandra’s death and the impact which this had or the fact that Ernestine had to make the dress herself and how this was hard work for her with her studies. Some candidates focused only on the background to the play and the poverty and racial aspects of society at the time. This evoked sympathy in that Ernestine was black and therefore subject to racial discrimination.

- (b) The wording of the question, 'To what extent', invited candidates to explore Godfrey's character and the most successful answers acknowledged that Godfrey was a complex character who had weaknesses and strengths, providing specific and well-selected textual support for their views. The best answers were those which empathetically tried to understand Godfrey's position: the recent loss of his wife, Sandra; the fear of racism that made him not want to stand out or stand up to racists, and the context of USA in the '50s for a black family.

The strongest answers showed awareness of his strength as he moved his family for a fresh start. They saw him as a loving father in a difficult situation and explored the challenges that he faced after his wife's death with his decisions to stop drinking, to fight off Lily's advances and to establish a principled upbringing for his daughters through religion, even if he did not always do the best job. Many answers explored the opening of the play and his crippling grief, engaging effectively with Ernestine's use of the '*wailing like a banshee*' image. Other strengths explored were his determination to provide for his children and his rejection of social expectations in marrying Gerte, as well as his relationship with his job.

Many candidates focused mainly on his weaknesses. One area of weakness which was explored effectively was Godfrey's obsession with Father Divine, blindly following an exploitative organisation which ultimately lets him down and renders him incapable of making a decision. Stronger responses explored the motif of the notebook, bags of paper and how Gerte leads him to eventually acknowledge his own foolishness with the destruction of the notes.

Weaker answers merely stated that Godfrey was weak by citing his neglect of his daughters due to his grief and his insensitivity to the loss of their mother, demonstrated by his hasty marriage to Gerte, prioritising her needs over theirs, for example, buying her the cardigan whilst not being able to afford the lace for Ernestine's graduation dress. There was little evidence of how the 'weakness' was displayed and understanding was often at surface level in a narrative approach. Although focusing on Godfrey, weaker answers provided a summary of the play rather than exploring what events and his behaviour conveyed of his character to the audience.

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

### Question 2

- (a) Some candidates struggled with the extract, confusing who was speaking to whom. Answers which argued that this was a conversation between the girls and Amusa were at a disadvantage, as this failed to understand the comedy of the girls mocking Amusa, parodying the colonial rulers and demonstrating the girls' knowledge of their habits, speech and opinions.

The most successful responses understood the context of the extract and the serious aspect that Amusa had been sent to arrest Elesin to prevent his ritual suicide which the girls were determined to prevent. They were able to recognise the mockery and the satire in the girls' parody of the British but often this was presented as paraphrase and explanation. Some stronger responses were able to recognise the irony of the fact that the girls' language was taken from the British stereotypes, proof in itself of the serious misconception that the British have of the 'natives' and of their oppression through colonial rule. Only the strongest answers recognised that the girls imitate the British and play-act that Amusa has no invitation to the British Residency and explored how well the girls understood what the British thought of them, their habit of seeing Africans mainly in relation to insulting stereotypes.

Many candidates commented on the fact that it was also evidence of the power of women in the Yoruban culture, from Iyalaja to the girls themselves, who are clearly well educated if they can so successfully mock Amusa. Few recognised that it was the older women who were '*tittering*', and little was made of the visual impact on stage of the girls taking the policemen's hats or, at the end of the passage, their '*surging forward*' to remove what they amusingly referred to as his '*knickers*'. A few made sensitive comments expressing sympathy for Amusa stating that he was a 'misfit' in society as the white people did not respect him, and the natives mocked him, and so this was a serious element to the extract as it reflected his unenviable predicament.

Less successful answers focused on colonial rule and British attitudes to the Nigerian population, gaining some credit for comments on the description of Amusa as an 'ox' and how the girls surprise



him into jumping to attention. Weaker responses did not understand the girls were mocking the English and took the conversation literally.

- (b) Most who answered this question appreciated that Olunde represents a bridge between the Yoruban and the British way of life. Some struggled with the idea of his 'dramatic impact', failing to focus on key theatrical moments, for example when Olunde finds out his father is alive, or when he rejects his father, or when his swaddled corpse appears on stage. They were able to demonstrate knowledge of the text and of Olunde's background: Elesin's son, sent to England by the Pilkings to study medicine. Only the strongest responses were able to explore Olunde's role in replacing Elesin, committing suicide to preserve order in the land – the father representing pleasure and the son duty, a reversal of the usual father-son dynamic. These answers analysed the communication, and misunderstanding, in the conversation between Olunde and Jane Pilkings, commenting on his calm, intelligence and self-assurance, by being aware of his history and by understanding why Jane Pilkings is disappointed in him. They were able to comment on the dramatic impact of his first entrance on stage that leads the audience to expect that he has been fully assimilated into the western culture making it particularly dramatic when the audience realises that he has committed ritual suicide in place of his father, Elesin.

Weaker responses consisted of a character profile, or a retelling of the plot, with limited focus or understanding of the requirements of the question. Some candidates were unable to refer to specific textual detail and answers were very general and explanatory in approach. There was some misreading of the text with candidates mistakenly thinking he had returned to see his father before he dies, rather than to bury him. There were some who seemed unaware that he has killed himself and the body brought on to stage is in fact Olunde's.

### TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

#### Question 3

- (a) This was a popular choice of text and question. Candidates engaged with the extract and with the play as a whole. Surprisingly, where context was commented on, the only points mentioned tended to be the fact that Blanche and Stella had been out and the men had been playing poker. Only the most successful answers commented on the fact that Mitch has already been introduced to Blanche and that she has quizzed Stella about his background because he seems 'superior' to the other men, particularly Stanley. These candidates commented on her seductive behaviour, the '[dark red satin wrap]' and her attempts to project a romanticised image of herself. Better responses saw Blanche as both predator and victim here, recognising her cunning and deceit but also her desperation.

Not all candidates expressed any sympathy for her but the ones who did generally offered a more insightful and nuanced response, recognising that her words of comfort to Mitch are both genuine and also part of her strategy to build a relationship. There was awareness that Mitch is a strongly contrasting character to Stanley and that Blanche begins to see him as her last hope. There was focus on the discussion around the inscribed lighter, Blanche's '[feigned]' difficulty in reading as a way to get closer to Mitch, and on the drama of her words: 'Sick people have such deep, sincere attachments.' The symbol of the naked light bulb was much discussed. Most candidates were able to offer some insights and knowledge of character through the symbol of the lantern; Blanche's lies about her age and her drinking of alcohol, and these were contrasted with Mitch's sincerity and care in helping her put up the lantern.

In less successful answers there was some exposition on the Old South/New America, represented by Blanche and Mitch, but this was not always relevant. There was some misunderstanding of the text where candidates did not understand the stage direction '[feigned]' and commented on this revealing Blanche's poor eyesight and, consequently, her age. There were some unusual interpretations of the '[red satin wrapper]' with some stating that because it was red it foreshadowed Mitch attempting to rape her, whilst others linked the colour red to the devil.

Weaker candidates discussed this meeting without close reference to the question, offering a paraphrasing of, or a commentary on the conversation without much focus on what makes it 'memorable'. Too often they lapsed into narrative, retelling Blanche's history and the suicide of her young husband.

- (b) This was a popular question and there was a wide range of answers seen. The most successful were aware of the tension between Stanley and Blanche and identified that part of the tension between them was the power struggle for Stella's approval and love. There was understanding of the conflict between the Old South and the New America, represented by Blanche and Stanley and the contrast in their backgrounds, lifestyles, values. Many were aware too of the physical contrast between the slight, fragile Blanche and the strong, muscular Stanley. They engaged with the relationship and were able to offer deeper interpretations of why their relationship is so dramatic. They focused on key scenes: Blanche's arrival and how her physical appearance contrasts with Stanley; Stanley overhearing Blanche telling Stella what she thinks about him; the rape scene and Blanche's departure with Stanley's final victory in the power struggle. The role of Stanley in uncovering the truth about Blanche and how this ultimately ended the relationship with Mitch was explored with critical understanding of the dramatic impact and staging. The best answers referenced his rape and deliberate forcing of Blanche into the world of reality whilst exploring the language, visual and aural effects of the shadows and the jungle noises, to show how the drama of the moment was made powerful. They were able to support their argument with reference to specific textual detail and relevant quotations.

Less successful responses tended to be more general in their comments, narrating parts of the play, and did not focus on how the relationship was made so 'powerfully dramatic'. Some wrote two character studies exploring their differences rather than focusing on key moments in their interaction and how they were dramatic. A few candidates misread the question and wrote about Stanley and Stella, rather than Stanley and Blanche with little of relevance to reward.

#### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream***

##### **Question 4**

- (a) This was a popular choice of text and question. The most successful answers established context briefly: Puck's error with the love potion results in both men loving Helena, Hermia is angry because she thinks Helena has stolen Lysander's love whilst Helena feels victimised because she thinks the other three are playing a trick on her. Candidates who did not have this clear understanding of the context were at a disadvantage. Those who did explored the insults in some detail, with the best not just explaining what they mean, but relating interpretations to this context, for example, 'juggler' with hints of juggling lovers, 'cankerblossom', that you may have a beauty which attracted the men, but you are diseased inside and 'thief' because Helena stole Lysander. Some commented on the humour of the ridiculous insult, their hilarious sounds, and the situation of two highly-born women, previously fairly genteel, throwing stupid and childish insults and threatening violence; some focused on their differences, for example, Helena tries to back down, whilst Hermia tries to fight back.

Better responses explored the humour of the dramatic turnaround of the women's friendship into enemies and Lysander's intense love for Hermia into his distaste for her. There was also the humour of Helena's previous grief at Demetrius not loving her and now that both men are declaring undying love for her, she does not believe them. The best candidates were able to comment on the visual staging of the height differences with close detail to the language, 'low', 'little', 'dwarf' and the final demeaning insults from Lysander on size, as well as 'maypole', and how this creates humour. There were some sensitive responses to the emotional and upsetting aspects of the scene for the women and how, nevertheless, it was entertaining due to the dramatic irony: the audience knowing it is temporary and will be put right. There were some good personal responses to Shakespeare's theme, for example, love being presented as fickle, ruining the sisterhood and loyalty of friends and love being blind.

Less successful answers were unclear about the situation with some confusion of characters and who loves whom. Some showed no knowledge of Puck's error and seemed genuinely confused about the use of language, providing a literal 'translation' and asserting certain words were entertaining but conveying little understanding of the language, situation, or how it was made so. They tended to be plot driven including some lengthy preambles about what had led to this point in the play. Responses were narrative in approach simply re-telling the events of the extract rather than exploring how it was entertaining.

- (b) The most successful answers considered what Oberon did in the play, and why, to decide how far they thought he was likeable. Most paid close attention to the question and produced balanced answers. They contrasted his affairs, his desire for the changeling boy and his dealings with

Titania, against his compassion for Helena, his insistence on rectifying Puck's errors, his pity for Titania, and how he wishes the humans well by blessing the marriages at the end. There were some strong personal responses addressing Oberon's 'controlling' and 'abusive' behaviour towards Titania and his desire for power, including his use of 'illegal' or 'unfair' drugs to get his way. Better answers noted that he only pities Titania after he gets what he wants and looked at his relationship with Puck, accusing him of encouraging Puck's reckless behaviour at the start, but when Oberon finds his error with the potion he is exasperated and insists it is rectified. A few candidates noted that he does not leave Titania to Puck but he applies the potion to Titania and removes it himself. Most finally arrived at the conclusion that his acts were worthy of admiration due to his sympathy for Helena and removal of the '*hateful*' vision from Titania to restore order and ensure all the lovers have a partner. The best candidates were able to explore the dramatic impact of Oberon and Puck's use of the love potion, supporting their argument with specific textual detail and some well-selected quotations which were thoroughly analysed.

Less successful answers tended to find him totally 'likeable' to the point of defending his cruel treatment of Titania to 'torment' her for the supposed 'injury' but these were not always convincingly argued. Others responded to the climate changes he and Titania cause by quarrelling, but found it difficult to relate this to whether he is 'likeable' or not.

Weaker answers wrote a character study of Oberon with little reference to the question of his likeability. There was also some misunderstanding with some thinking he had given Bottom the ass's head for her to fall in love with. Some candidates, attempting to explore language, made confusing references to Bottom/ass/arse demonstrating a fundamental misunderstanding of the text and language.

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

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was the most popular text and most candidates answered this question. Candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge of the text but should be reminded to focus on the question and extract: some candidates used information from previous questions, for example, on Iago and attempted to adapt it to this question, often unsuccessfully.

The most successful answers provided detailed comments on what made this moment both dramatic and significant. They were able to contextualise the extract, briefly, and to incorporate other salient moments from the play to demonstrate the 'significance', without losing focus on the question and extract. There was understanding that Iago had orchestrated the drunken brawl which has led to Cassio's demotion and most answers explored Cassio's distress, selecting examples of repetition, exclamation and hyperbole in his language. Many responses honed in on the opening line and the repetition of '*my reputation*'. Better responses explored the meaning and effect of '*reputation*' on Cassio in the context of the times and made the link between honour and reputation.

Most answers explored the dramatic irony, along with the use of sibilance and other language features, connecting them to the question requirements securely. There was understanding of Iago's claims of love, honesty and advice in this scene and that Iago's advice is, in fact, a key step in his insidious plan to destroy Cassio, Othello and Desdemona. Stronger answers engaged with the religious imagery especially to the 'devil' and explored the irony that Iago is the real devil. They explored the animal imagery – dog, lion and parrot with strong responses linking Cassio's comment on wine making him '*speak parrot*' and men '*putting an enemy in their mouths*' to Iago's manipulation of him later with Desdemona.

Other valuable points included comparison of Cassio's distress and Iago's composed and manipulative manner, exploration of how Iago succeeds in calming Cassio down through the passage and has completely persuaded him by the end, discussion of the breakdown of Cassio's language, its fragmentation and use of bestial imagery, and the recognition of Shakespeare's use of prose in this passage and its effect. Many answers included relevant reference to Iago's plan to make Othello jealous; however, some answers focused too much on the scheme against Othello, paying insufficient attention to the passage itself.

Less successful answers simply narrated the scene with the weakest responses focussing on a character study of Iago, therefore not meeting the question requirements fully. A number of responses mentioned '*beasts*' and '*devil*' and hellish motifs being repeated but failed to explore the

significance of this. Some candidates focused entirely on punctuation, for example, the use of short sentences: '*I know not*' and '*Drunk!*' but were unable to develop or link their choices to the question. Line references, rather than direct quotations, resulted in responses being underdeveloped and the loss of opportunities to explore the ways the writer achieved effects which is a requirement to meet the criteria for marks in the higher levels.

- (b) Many candidates argued assertively that Brabantio is not sympathetic due to his racist and misogynistic outlook. The strongest answers were able to consider both his sympathetic and less sympathetic aspects. These answers showed understanding of the Jacobean context with its patriarchal, gender and hierarchical norms. However, there were some sweeping generalisations about the prejudices of Jacobean audiences with many candidates overlooking the fact that Othello was accepted by Brabantio before the marriage with no reference to his ethnicity. Stronger answers looked at how Brabantio is provoked by Iago and Roderigo's language, betrayed by his daughter and dismissed later by the Duke. They engaged effectively with the inherent racism and sexism in Brabantio's accusations in Act 1. The language Brabantio used when referring to Othello was explored with better answers exploring the way he was confronted in the middle of the night, caught unawares and publicly shamed by Iago and Roderigo. The sexual imagery, linked to animals was explored as something difficult for any father, no matter what the race of the man.

Some answers explored valuably his final, ironic, warning to Othello and Desdemona's betrayal. There was understanding of Brabantio's loss of face and its importance to him with some noting that he was one of Iago's early victims. Candidates explored his sense of betrayal, contrasting a loving father missing his daughter with his encouraging Othello to doubt her trustworthiness and the implications of this. Some responses examined the idea of Brabantio's 'ownership' of his daughter, with a more modern perspective, and whether he deserved sympathy.

Weaker candidates often focused on the idea that Brabantio is a 'loving' father but offered little evidence to support this. Some candidates took a very personal response here, imagining how they would feel if their loving child betrayed them. While this showed engagement with the question, it often led to limited engagement with the actual text. There was a common misunderstanding of what happens to Brabantio at the end, whether he was dead or alive when Desdemona died but most candidates saw that in a way Brabantio was right to be concerned about the marriage considering his daughter was murdered.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/33</b> <b>Drama (Open Text)</b></p>
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## Key messages

- Successful responses focused on the key question terms and avoided writing introductions which consisted largely of plot summaries or explorations of historical context. Effective conclusions were more than a repetition of previous ideas.
- A personal engagement with the text as drama and an awareness of stagecraft was demonstrated by the most successful responses.
- A range of textual support and full analysis of references was a feature of the most successful responses. Precise, contextualised quotations were the most effective form of textual support.
- Successful responses were aware that the contextualisation of the passage is important in passage-based responses, and they selected material from throughout the passage, including the ending. Close analysis of the language was a feature of successful responses.
- Less successful responses commented on the use of literary techniques without considering their intended effect or how they relate to the content and context of the passage.
- Successful responses to the discursive questions kept the question in focus and precise textual references from throughout the text were used to support arguments.

## General comments

Many candidates demonstrated engagement with, and enjoyment of their set texts and some excellent work was seen. There were two new texts this year, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Centres are reminded that *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, will be replaced on the set syllabus texts in 2025 by Shakespeare's, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney.

The most successful responses showed critical understanding of the texts and made a perceptive and sensitive response to characterisation, stagecraft and language. These drama texts were written to be performed on stage and successful responses engaged with this fact and with the impact of visual and aural effects on the audience. Referring to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'book' demonstrated this awareness. Some weaker responses tended to summarise the plot, listing knowledge about the play but with no link to the question.

Successful responses focused on the key terms of the question such as 'striking', 'powerful', 'disturbing' or 'entertaining', regularly referencing these terms in their responses.

Making a brief plan is a good idea to help candidates to select relevant material for inclusion, and to help them to remain focused on the question. It is helpful to annotate a passage before attempting the question.

Briefly setting the passage in context at the start of the response is important in a passage-based questions and was a feature of successful responses, demonstrating understanding of the structure of the text. Working chronologically through the passage rather than starting in the middle is essential to ensure thorough coverage of the passage. The response should consider the key terms in the question, the events of the given moment and an exploration of the writer's methods in conveying his or her intentions to the audience, including exploration of language and staging effects. Brief well-selected references should be analysed fully.

The strongest answers to discursive questions chose a range of material from the text as a whole and used well-chosen, concise references to support points: references should be analysed fully.

Literary techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing and their effect on the audience, were often explored successfully, with support and analysis. However, many responses tended to point out such techniques with no exploration of their effects. Similarly, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created, seems unproductive.

It was noted that there was a deterioration in handwriting, and although this paper 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) More successful responses were able to explore the racial tension of the time, linking it to Godfrey's initial hesitancy to engage with Gerte for fear of finding himself in 'trouble'. There was some understanding that the setting of the play not long after World War 2 is significant to his reaction to Gerte as she is German. However, the majority failed to recognise that many of Godfrey's actions are because of his colour and that Gerte has not appreciated the situation. Some candidates discussed Godfrey's remark about Gerte being the '*first German I seen that ain't in a newsreel*' and thus were able to possibly link this to Godfrey's initial wariness towards her.

Several weaker responses did not contextualise the passage and showed little or no awareness of events or characters in the wider play, as if the passage had been approached as an unseen text.

There was some response to the staging, but few responses fully appreciated the final stage directions, and the focus was often more on Godfrey than on why this is a striking introduction to Gerte. Few candidates commented that both characters are trying to escape from something. Some candidates mentioned the cookies but did not understand their significance, the fact that Gerte is very hungry, which is why she greedily stuffs the cookie in her mouth.

- (b) The obvious points about Lily – her Communist views, her challenge to racism, her drinking, her influence on Ernestine – were identified but many other points such as her previous involvement with Godfrey, her contempt for his religious ideas, her response to Gerte, that she is a freeloader – were ignored. Candidates were often positive about Lily being strong-willed and confident in what she stands for: non-conformist, eccentric and unabashed. They were able to identify how Lily is not ashamed to show her black identity which is very much a part of who she is, helping to make her more deserving of admiration. Likewise, there was comment on how she will not allow society to shame her for being black, focusing on her belief that everyone is equal. A few responses referred to her remarks about Gerte and how these could, ironically, be considered racist. Candidates were able to comment on Lily's ideals being appealing to Ernestine and how she acts as a catalyst for her to develop her aspirations.

There was some understanding of Lily's good intentions and of how they are affected by her drunkenness. Her physical appearance was commented on and the idea that she loves to dress smartly as she believes it confuses and annoys white people.

Some responses noted her deep-rooted loneliness beneath the brash facade and how she feels rejected by Godfrey, but use of the text was minimal and attempts to comment on the language were often limited. Responses were often unable to find supporting evidence from the text and instead tended to describe Lily's character.

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

## Question 2

- (a) Successful responses contextualised the passage and were aware that at this point Pilkings does not know that the burden carried by the women is Olunde's body. The powerful nature of Olunde's death and the disturbing revelation of his body were discussed, with particular focus on how the revelation of the '*burden*' is delayed, and the dramatic impact of this. They understood the deeper implications of honour, ritual suicide and the idea of cultural identity.

Some responses understood the symbolic meaning of the chains as something that literally and figuratively prevent Elesin from fulfilling his duty of the suicide ritual and this was connected to the theme of slavery. Elesin has enjoyed living in the present plane of existence and is reluctant to let it go which chains him down. Likewise, the irony of the chains preventing him from harming himself, being the cause of his death was understood. Stage directions proved useful in showing the determination of Elesin's actions in strangling himself, with candidates being able to comment on the adjectives '*swift*' and '*decisive*' which are used to powerfully describe his actions. Overall, candidates expressed real personal engagement with the horror of this moment.

The themes of honour and duty were outlined and Elesin's guilt and shame were understood and supported and his '*rock-still*' stance was often explored, engaging with the drama on stage.

The clash between Iyalojah and Pilkings was discussed, showing understanding that at this point, Iyalojah holds the power. Her scream and instruction to Pilkings to, '*Let him alone!*' were used to illustrate this power as well as her anger. Insightful responses commented on Iyaloja's indifference and cynicism to Elesin's death contrasting it to the horror of Pilkings witnessing such a scene and his attempts to revive Elesin. This gave candidates the opportunity to focus on the deeply rooted traditions of the Yoruba people and how they must be adhered to despite what the 'educated' British may think. The impact of colonisation on the Yorubans is voiced powerfully by Iyaloja. There were some sound observations of her use of questioning, blaming the colonists and their meddling resulting in the discordance and impacting the future of her people. The consequences of Pilkings' interference were discussed with candidates understanding that due to Pilkings' interference, two deaths have been caused instead of his intention which was to prevent one death.

In weaker responses, themes of honour and duty as well as Elesin's shame and guilt were often understood but not fully supported. There was some misunderstanding about Olunde's body being rolled in the mat and there was little reference to the language of the passage.

Few candidates mentioned the role of the bride who performs the ritual of closing Elesin's eyes in keeping with the honour and duty of the Yoruba people, her pregnancy giving hope for the future.

- (b) This was a less popular question. Stronger responses understood that the question offered the chance to debate whether or not Jane Pilkings is a likeable character, taking one side or giving a sense of balance. Many candidates were able to reference Jane's sensitivity in attempting to understand other cultures in contrast to her husband's arrogant dismissal of them, but that this sensitivity only goes so far. Likewise, there was relevant evidence of her attempting to moderate Simon's behaviour by reminding him of his mistakes when she sees Amusa's look of shock and horror when they wear the Egungun costume as fancy dress. However, there is evidence of her sense of superiority when she refers to Amusa as a '*pagan*'. There was clear understanding of her insensitivity and hypocrisy in her conversation with Olunde when she assumes that he will no longer wish to follow traditional customs on his return home, having spent time in Europe, which further enhances her prejudice. Likewise, her fixed mindset was evidenced when rejecting Olunde's argument, making no attempt to understand his point of view. Her hypocrisy about '*mass suicide*' is shown and she calls him '*barbaric*' and '*a savage*'. Strong responses focused on the disrespect of the Pilkings' for the Egungun and the links to the wider play, expanding the debate from Jane to the British in general.

Weaker responses often seemed to feel obliged to present Jane as likeable and many struggled to do this successfully. Some responses attempted to contrast Jane with Iyalojah, but with limited success. Many responses became repetitive on the theme of cultural insensitivity and only a few used the quote '*You're just a savage like all the rest*', to demonstrate her attitude towards Olunde and the Yoruba people.

**TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

**Question 3**

- (a) This was a very popular text and question and many candidates showed clear engagement with the text and how the scene is made disturbing, producing interesting and sustained responses. There was apt coverage of Blanche being taken away and how the scene with its animalistic depictions contributes to the unsettling atmosphere.

The most successful responses contextualised the passage as following Stanley's rape of Blanche, exploring her subsequent breakdown and the disturbing fact that no-one believes her about the rape. Stella's guilt was discussed, and the way that she feels disturbed by what she has done to Blanche was explored. Stronger personal responses argued that she may fear the consequences for her own life of believing Blanche's claim that Stanley raped her, even though deep down, she probably does believe it. The out-of-character behaviour of Mitch was explored, as well as the hysteria of Blanche and the contrasting behaviour of the Doctor and the Matron. The aggressive and sexual behaviour of Stanley was also highlighted.

At this point Stanley is determined to remove Blanche from his household rather than try to help her and shows excitement at the prospect of removing her. This was referenced in his running and exclamations- '*Hey! Hey! Doctor!*' Successful responses identified Stanley's determined nature and his brutality to achieve his own goals, '*he pushes him aside*'. These responses were also able to identify the change in Mitch's behaviour and to focus on the language used to express this, '*he lunges and strikes at Stanley*', but they understood that his actions pose no threat to Stanley, who is only focused on getting the doctor to take Blanche away so that he can resume his old life. Indeed, candidates understood that although some of the characters may feel sympathy for Blanche, most of them remain quiet as they fear the reprisals from Stanley if they speak up.

The strongest responses engaged fully with the drama onstage-the tension, movement and effects. Details such as the repeated reference to '*sobbing*,' and stage directions such as '*Blanche turns wildly*' and '*the inhuman cries and noises die out*', were referenced and analysed to successfully illustrate the disturbing nature of the passage. The Matron's comment that, '*These fingernails have to be trimmed*', was discussed as evidence that Blanche no longer has control over her appearance, which was previously so important to her.

Successful responses also focused on Blanche's words '*the kindness of strangers*' and their irony. Blanche's trust in the Doctor who has come to take her to the asylum and the disturbing way that no-one intervenes was examined. Some candidates showed insight by discussing how the Doctor is more disturbing than the Matron, despite her acting as the dominant force, in that he is sinister in his pretence of being kind, only in order to control Blanche's behaviour. Blanche's response to the doctor links to her past relationships with men and how she can no longer distinguish between being coaxed and tricked; the doctor, in effect, leading her to her demise. Those candidates who considered the stage directions, '*desperate pleading*' on the part of Blanche showed further understanding of her state of mind and vulnerability.

Some candidates commented on the stage directions, '*as if she was blind*' suggesting that Blanche is already 'blind' to reality.

The way that Stella's baby is handed to her as a symbol of her future without Blanche was understood, and there was some comment that the blue blanket indicating a boy, disturbingly foreshadows another Stanley.

Stella's '*luxurious*' sobbing and also the disturbing inappropriateness of Stanley's sensual soothing of his distraught wife as '*his fingers find the opening of her blouse*', and how this adds to the disturbing nature of the passage, were explored. One candidate commented perceptively that, 'Stanley hopes that Stella's sexual pleasure will make her stay with him, and the most disturbing part is that it does'. Many candidates were able to consider how his determination to be rid of Blanche and his villainous victory make the scene disturbing.

Less successful responses did not mention the important context point that Stanley has raped Blanche and did not cover the passage thoroughly. These responses tended to assume that Blanche understands and is accepting her fate, being realistic and leaving fantasy behind. Occasionally responses misunderstood Stanley's words about Mitch – '*this bone-headed cry-baby*,'



as referring to Stanley and Stella's baby. There was much comment on the idea of it being a male-dominated society and weaker responses spent much time discussing this.

Weaker responses also missed important moments of staging and quite a few began with Blanche and almost ignored the behaviour of other characters. Few candidates mentioned '*the jacket*' or understood its meaning. However, many candidates obviously enjoyed the play and the passage and were able to respond positively to it though some seemed uncertain about which characters actually know about Stanley's rape of Blanche.

- (b) The strongest responses were able to support their ideas with appropriate references ranging throughout the play. They recognised the significant differences between Blanche and Stella especially regarding men and, in particular, with reference to Stanley. They considered the difference between Blanche's delusional view of life and Stella's more realistic attitude and many recognised that Blanche is more outspoken than Stella. Some candidates noted that Blanche represents the fading Old South and, as a Southern Belle, is unable to cope with its falling decay and the rise of the New America. In contrast, Stella has adapted to her new life with Stanley in New Orleans.

Successful responses referred to how Blanche holds Stella's working-class environment in contempt, making derogatory comments not only about her living conditions, but also about her husband and in so doing emasculating him. In contrast Stella is more practical in accepting her new life, something that Blanche cannot comprehend. Unlike her sister, Blanche stands up to Stanley. There was some interesting comment made on how the sisters cope with their reality. Blanche fabricates lies to protect herself whereas Stella is shown to prefer realism. However, when Stella is abused by her husband, she excuses his behaviour '*he didn't know what he was doing*', and in so doing, fabricates a different reality, just as her sister has done. Likewise, she refuses to accept the reality of the situation of Stanley raping her sister. There was much comment on the patriarchal society Stella resides in and her dependence and submissiveness to Stanley to protect both the welfare of herself and her new baby. She needs to believe in her husband. Like her sister, she has a dependence on men.

Successful responses focused on language to illustrate the difference between the quiet, straightforward Stella and dramatic, flighty Blanche. Blanche's lengthy speech about Belle Reve was cited as an example, with Stella staying silent throughout.

The characters' appearance was contrasted, with candidates often focusing on Blanche being '*daintily dressed in a white suit*'. Whereas Blanche avoids the light, Stella is confident in her appearance despite Blanche's criticism of the stained clothing she wears. There was focus on past events such as Blanche's husband committing suicide and the loss of Belle Reve and the impact these events have on Blanche, and her attempt to cling to 'old America', as opposed to Stella moving on. These responses explored the sisters' dramatically contrasting situations at the end of the play, with Stella choosing her husband and baby and Blanche reliant on the ironic '*comfort of strangers*', as she is taken away to an asylum.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the contrasting characters but were often imbalanced, with much focus on Blanche and little on Stella. The appearance of the sisters was contrasted, although candidates often struggled to find relevant textual support. These responses were often lacking in precise textual support, were narrow in range and tended to drift into narrative. Some engagement with and understanding of the two characters was nevertheless evident.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

### **Question 4**

- (a) Candidates generally engaged well with this passage, providing the context that Theseus has found the lovers asleep while out hunting, after Puck has anointed Lysander's eyes with the love potion so that his love for Hermia will return. Many responses showed a genuine sense of satisfaction that Egeus is overruled by Theseus, meaning that Hermia and Lysander can marry. Similarly, candidates expressed satisfaction that Helena, after all her suffering, has found love. There was also an awareness of the tension at the start of the passage, a sense of relief that all three storylines are resolved and happiness that there will be three weddings.

Stronger responses interpreted the ending as partially unsatisfactory and unjust, indicating a darker tone, as Demetrius remains under the effects of the love potion and will never return to his senses. They expressed a sense of sadness and an awareness that the audience may feel 'moral qualms', because his love for Helena is 'manufactured' and he will never truly know who he chose as his true love.

Demetrius's language in, '*melted as the snow*', was often explored successfully, as was '*Now I do wish it, love it, long for it.*' There was some focus on the use of iambic pentameter, not always successfully explored, and on how Lysander is interrupted by Egeus, showing his contempt.

Many weaker responses did not progress beyond the idea of this passage showing a happy ending for the lovers. There was little coverage of Theseus's entrance at the beginning of the passage in weaker responses, with context rarely provided, and some misunderstanding of Egeus's '*defeated...me of my consent*', with some believing that he has been persuaded to allow Hermia to marry Lysander rather than been overruled by Theseus. Understanding of the language was not completely secure, with some examples being Theseus's words, '*overbear your will*', and '*eternally be knit*'. Many candidates did not show understanding that Demetrius is still under the effects of the spell.

Some responses became preoccupied by the theme of patriarchy, believing that Theseus's ruling breaks the patriarchy, when he is in fact part of the same. In general, coverage of the passage lacked thoroughness.

- (b) Candidates generally chose two relevant moments, and set them in context, often focusing on Titania falling in love with Bottom as an ass, the Mechanicals' rehearsals and the arguments between the lovers in the wood. Strong responses analysed and contextualised the moments and the language and were able to justify what they found entertaining about them. The text was explored carefully and provided some insightful responses.

There was some focus on humour through the insults hurled between Hermia and Helena and on the wordplay in Bottom's mistakes. Successful responses were able to discuss the contribution of the chosen moments to the plot, characterisation and themes of the play. Strong responses focused on visual effects, such as the lion or the wall in the Mechanicals' rehearsals or on the conflicts and mistaken identities which make the moments entertaining.

Often the chosen moments of weaker responses were only explored superficially, lacking sufficient depth and supporting detail for high reward. In many responses the second moment was explored in less detail than the first. There was, however, often evidence that candidates genuinely engaged with the humour and drama of the text, despite development of the responses being limited.

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

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was a very popular text and question. Successful responses were able to contextualise the passage as taking place upon Othello's safe arrival in Cyprus after the storm at sea, and his reunion with Desdemona. They showed awareness of the movement onstage, and the intensity of the emotions expressed, engaging with the couple's happiness shown in their public kiss and their loving language, '*O my fair warrior!*' '*My dear Othello*', and '*Honey*', '*my sweet*', as well as Othello's dramatic imagery of '*Olympus-high*'. They explored how this highlights the duplicitous nature of '*honest*' Iago and his maliciousness later on, along with the contrasting portrayals of love as pure and committed, as opposed to lustful and sexual. Iago's description of Desdemona as a sexual being was explored, focusing on his imagery of feeding and appetite and understanding his misogyny. Understanding was also shown by many candidates of Iago's scoffing at Othello's words, illustrating his sardonic and cynical personality alongside this misogyny.

The fact that the celebration is due to Turkish deaths was noted to be disturbing by some candidates. The irony of Othello's words '*our wars are done*', was recognised by stronger responses, and the change in tone which provides a sense of foreboding was explored. Analysis of Iago's metaphorical aside '*I'll set down the pegs that make this music*', was effective in showing the contrast with Othello and Desdemona's harmony, and the use of an aside and its effect, adding to the dramatic irony, was successfully discussed. The change from verse to prose was often

pointed out and stronger responses discussed the significance of this language point. Iago's language describing Othello as a '*devil*', and '*telling fantastical lies*', was referenced as evidence of how the passage is made disturbing, and the dramatic irony was understood.

Less successful responses made little reference to the start of the passage with Othello and Desdemona's greeting, while some interpreted the expression of their love as 'over-the-top' and therefore fake. These responses tended to focus mainly on Iago's exchange with Roderigo, but there was much misunderstanding of the line, '*Desdemona is directly in love with him*', interpreting this as Iago telling Roderigo that she is in love with Othello, not Cassio. There was often no reference to Cassio's role in the plot at all. Overall understanding of what is happening in the passage was nevertheless shown.

- (b) Successful responses demonstrated thorough knowledge of the text and were able to select and use many appropriate quotations from both Iago and Emilia. They recognised that Emilia, who might have once loved Iago, now acts out of a sense of duty. They included detailed quotations from the dock-side scene where Emilia, Iago and Desdemona are discussing women in general and also examined the final deadly confrontation between Iago and Emilia. There was valid comment on how Iago disrespects and slanders women throughout the play, often reducing them to their sexual worth. Candidates who made reference to his unfounded suspicions of Emilia being unfaithful with Othello began exploring the relationship in greater detail. They understood that he does not care about his wife until he believes that she has been unfaithful, and treats her as a possession, not to be shared with anyone else. They also showed awareness of Emilia's jaded perspective on faithfulness as opposed to Desdemona's shock that any wife would consider being unfaithful. They gave an overview of Iago's misogyny and his derogatory comments about women throughout the play, in general and specifically about Emilia. They explored his revenge plot and understood Emilia's unwitting part in furthering this plot. These responses contrasted the couple and their jaded relationship with the loving, romantic relationship of Othello and Desdemona.

Textual references such as '*a foolish wife*' explored what Iago thinks of Emilia, only praising her as '*a good wench*' when she does his bidding and gives him the handkerchief. His cynical attitude towards women and love was demonstrated here.

Emilia's horror upon discovering her husband's role in Desdemona's death was explored and her shocked repetition of '*my husband*', was often given as an example of this. Her willingness to announce Iago's guilt was commented on, and some candidates expressed satisfaction that she finally speaks out against her manipulative husband. Others noted that the only time she ever stands up to Iago results in her death, Iago killing her in order to silence her.

Weaker responses made little reference to the text and language. They often claimed that Emilia is complicit in Iago's plot, and many did not mention that she is murdered by her husband. These responses often lacked precise textual support. Most commented on the handkerchief but many often drifted into narrative on this subject and wasted valuable examination time writing about the role of women in Elizabethan or Jacobean society. Many candidates became sidetracked by Iago and his machinations and wrote little about Emilia.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/41</b> <b>Unseen</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

- The question always asks candidates to focus on the writing; the bullet points can help to structure a response, but an overview of the whole text is expected.
- Quotation should support knowledge and understanding; quotation is most effective when short and embedded within commentary.
- The focus of commentary should be the effect of the writer's choices of language, form and structure, not simply the identification of devices.
- Personal response could be focused more on why the writer wrote the text; good responses were critical as well as personal.

## **General comments**

Examiners reported seeing many enthusiastic and effective responses to each of the texts set for the paper and were struck by the prevalence of answers that suggested a real engagement with the writing. It is always particularly interesting when Examiners see equal numbers of responses to poetry and prose, and disappointing when centres appear to restrict candidates to just one genre: the time allocation for the paper includes 20 minutes for reading and planning, which gives candidates time to make a choice. Prose texts offer different opportunities for analysis, with more focus on narrative technique rather than lyrical expression and can broaden centre's development of their candidates' analytical skills, and awareness of how structure as well as language shape meaning. These skills, of course, can also sharpen candidates' analysis of their set texts, especially their responses to extract-based questions. This paper itself tests all the Assessment Objectives for Literature in English, which will be addressed in the paragraphs which follow.

Candidates are expected to show overall knowledge of the content of the text they have chosen. The introductory rubric, if carefully read, provides information necessary to avoid errors of understanding, especially of the situation in the prose extract. The bullet points can help to give structure to candidates' responses, and they encourage close attention to descriptive language and to interpretation of the text. However, what Examiners assess is response to the stem question, which is always focused on the writing and on how the writer creates effects for a sensitive reader. Responses which are purely narrative cannot gain marks in the higher levels, which require response to the language of the text. The question asks how, not what. Too many candidates still begin their essay with an almost verbatim rehearsal of the question followed by the bullet points and a list of literary devices, which may or may not be present in the text and the candidate's response. The introduction should be an opportunity to show overall knowledge of the text, its subject matter, themes or characters, key developments, tone and mood, before exploring in detail how that tone and mood are created.

The interpretation of meaning from surface to a deeper level is the key to achievement of Assessment Objective 2 in this paper as in other parts of the Literature in English syllabus. Good quotation technique is one way in which candidates can demonstrate deeper understanding. Beginning a sentence or paragraph with a quotation might allow for identification and even analysis of techniques, but it is unlikely to show interpretative understanding or the development of critical argument. Weaker responses tended to be over-reliant on lengthy quotations, expecting the textual reference alone to demonstrate understanding but better answers used shorter, more focused quotation as a stepping stone to critical commentary.

Precision of analysis of language techniques is usually a discriminating factor when Examiners determine the level that a response has reached. Many candidates spent too long listing or simply identifying rhetorical features of the text without commentary on their effect. There was also some confusion about the meaning of technical terms: imagery was often used as a label for almost any form of descriptive writing, personification for almost any kind of metaphorical suggestion, anaphora for almost any repetition (even in prose) and

caesura for any pause including in prose or at the end of a line of verse. Some candidates attempt to impress using extremely obscure Latin or Greek rhetorical terminology when simply referring to repetition (ideally spelt correctly) would be just as highly rewarded. It is not the identification of devices which matters, but the quality of commentary on their effect. Comment on structure has become much more evident in candidates' responses. This is a welcome development, but just like comment on language it needs to be linked to meaning, and to the progression evident to the reader of the text. Those able to link structural features to accurate awareness of narrative or poetic form, and thus to the writer's choices and how they shape meaning for the reader, were especially likely to achieve the higher levels. The higher levels in the mark scheme expect critical understanding, which entails sensitivity to the way the text has been crafted for deliberate impact on the reader.

Exploring how the text works should drive interpretation of why the writer wrote it, and what they expect the reader to feel. That is what is meant in the syllabus by AO4 (personal response). The tone and mood of texts chosen at this level is likely to involve some complexity, ambiguity and even irony. Examiners are experienced with candidate work at this level and trained to be alert to different kinds of interpretation. Indeed, they welcome alternative readings, if those are informed by attention to details of language and accurate interpretation of meaning. Personal responses which are highly subjective and not grounded in critical response to the writer's methods are less likely to be effective, and good personal response is integrated throughout the answer, rather than simply forming the basis of concluding paragraphs.

As ever, the preciseness of analysis of language techniques was a discriminating factor in determining a level. Candidates who could identify patterns and make links between devices/textual evidence to explore the ideas being presented by the writer produced successful responses. Candidates should use reading time to identify unusual images and uses of language, while exploring the whole structure of the text: our first impressions, how the text develops and how it ends. Candidates who make insightful comments on the final stanzas or paragraphs of text, and how the ending of the text relates to its overall structure and progression are more likely to achieve high marks. Similarly brief but strong introductions and conclusions, which do not simply repeat points made elsewhere but show insight into the meaning and purpose of the writing are clear indications of a strong script.

Examiners are skilled in engaging with the meaning of candidates' work even if their written English is not always clear: we assess the quality of the process of making meaning from literary texts and do so without a prescription for an 'ideal answer'. However, the work of Examiners is much easier if candidates write legibly, avoid references to line numbers without quotation, and organise their paragraphing and expression clearly and concisely, without the need for asterisked footnotes and addenda.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

Many excellent answers were seen on the poem 'Starling' by Robert Macfarlane (from *The Lost Spells*), where the poet's admiration for the species of bird appeared infectious.

In strong answers, candidates noted the repeated pattern of this eight-stanza poem presented in a regular format of 3 plus 2-line verses, each end-stopped and self-contained. Some candidates, perhaps fewer than might have been expected, noted that the poem was also an acrostic, spelling out the word, STARLING, with the first letter of each line. Most candidates noted the frequency with which the poet described the difficult-to-pin-down coloration of the bird, and they noted the use of hyphenated phrases to contain the near impossible mixture of colours to be found in a single bird's wing.

However elegantly or inelegantly candidates expressed themselves, many noted the poet's use of hyphenated structures as a mirroring of the impossibility to find a single word with which to define the bird. Much attention was given to the opening stanza where the colours 'green', 'blue' and 'gold' were to be found in the poet's description of the starling's wing. Candidates frequently acknowledged that each of the colours is modified in relation to a natural or a manufactured/mined element – moss, steel, gold. There was some speculation about whether or not these comparisons were offered on a sliding scale of intrinsic 'value' or were randomly chosen to represent the multifaceted nature of the colour of the bird's plumage.

Some candidates mentioned that the 'simple' colour 'black', which a less-enamoured observer of the starling might use to describe its colour, is never used by the poet without a dramatic qualifier, as in 'cave-black' or 'In-the-dead-of-night-black'. Some candidates remarked that, while the poet never uses 'darkness' or 'light' as descriptors, his word-choice and creation of fascinating compound adjectives simulate the extremes of

these 'polar-opposites'. The words 'gleam', 'bright' and 'tar', 'shade', 'pitch', 'ink' standing in for their more insipid 'cousins'.

Most candidates commented, with some confidence, on the structure of the poem and on the poet's use of hyphens and dashes, caesurae and 'end stops'. Many remarked on the internal rhymes and rhythms that the poet created, especially when describing the sounds made by the starling in its 'Rooftop riprap street-smart/hip-hop of starling song.' While less intuitive candidates described the starling song as 'melodic' or 'harmonious', possibly fulfilling their expectation of a description of birdsong, others recognised the piercing obtrusiveness of a 'song' that could be compared with the worst of modern man's inventions.

While noting the poet's ability to hyperbolise the 'common' starling, some candidates were equally fascinated by the manner in which the poet emphasised their incomparability. Phrases that remark upon the starling's 'unique' appearance, song and movement struck some candidates as becoming ever more emphatic, from a rather tame, 'fall short' at the end of the first two verses, to 'nowhere near', to 'still be pale', to 'never learn', each phrase more definitive than the last.

Many candidates remarked upon the poet's appeal to the senses of sight, sound and touch, adding up, as one candidate expressed it, to a 'sensory overload' of admiration on the poet's part. Others remarked upon a coming together of the freedom of nature – 'moss', 'cave', sky – and of the containment of 'urban' living – 'car', 'phone', 'street' neither of which could contain or equal the wonder of the starling.

Occasionally, candidates were side-tracked into seeing the poet's celebration of the starling as a condemnation of human polluters. They cited the references to 'tar', 'pitch', 'roof-top', 'street' as the poet's disdain for what others might view as 'development' or 'progress'. These were valid observations. Others went beyond the words of the poem to invent a 'green' agenda without fully supporting their ideas from the poet's own words.

It was pleasing to see candidates not only identifying features such as assonance, alliteration and sibilance, but actually explaining the effects created through these devices in terms of the sounds and, more importantly, the meaning created by these devices. There was some very good work seen on the poet's ability to create the depth of darkness represented by the starling in the stanza beginning 'Let shade clasp coal clasp pitch/clasp storm clasp witch' which seemed, to some, to epitomise a sort of unholy union between the starling and agents of darkness. The physical intimacy suggested by the word 'clasp' was interpreted as a sensual celebration of darkness as represented by the bird.

Although not recognised universally, there were some impressive explorations of the way in which the poet builds from the 'singular', yet representative, 'starling' to the breath-taking movement of the 'flock'. In so doing, the poet eschews the compound adjectives of earlier stanzas and simply describes, without commas or dashes, the 'swirling surging whirling melting' formation of the starlings, en masse. Many candidates commented on the effectiveness of this technique and the way in which the reader is made 'almost breathless' by the accelerating pace of the line.

A few candidates found the reference to 'Northern lights' in the poem something of a distraction latterly and began to rhapsodize somewhat about this natural phenomenon, taking their focus away from the starling, towards the end of their answers.

Examiners saw few answers where candidates appeared not to engage with the poem or where they adopted a negative response either to the subject matter or to the poet's presentation of it. However, a handful of candidates, some of whom had offered quite well-developed and even perceptive explorations of the poem, did conclude that a starling is 'just a bird after all', hinting at a preference for poetry with loftier aims.

## Question 2

Answers on the prose extract, taken from Anita Desai's novel *Fasting, Feasting*, covered the full range of achievement. The relatively short passage was introduced, as is customary, with some information about the main character in the passage, Uma, to help candidates to understand her situation.

Not all candidates appeared to have absorbed these details, and, as a result, there were many scripts seen which revealed some misunderstanding of Uma's experience at the river, which was the focus of the question. Where candidates understood the context of the passage, they made more accurate assumptions about Uma's experience and more plausible suggestions about her thoughts and feelings.

Almost all candidates appreciated that all the guests in the party about to take their 'ritual bath' in the river were 'in a state of high excitement', as stated clearly in the third paragraph of the passage. In better answers, candidates explored the expression of this excitement through probing the writer's use of language. Most picked up on the oxymoron of 'pleasurable panic' and appreciated that the 'screaming' and the 'clutching' of each other was part of that excitement and a mixture of exhilaration and hilarity.

Some candidates noted the contrast between the language describing the 'thrilled' behaviour of the guests in the third paragraph and that of the preceding paragraph, where the experienced 'boatman' is described in very different terms. The boatman poles the boat 'slowly', he 'steadied' the boat, 'advised' the guests and 'cautioned them' about the currents. Astute candidates referred to this collection of 'cautionary' verbs and adverbs as a 'foreshadowing' of the perils of the waters that Uma soon succumbs to. There were many sensitive readings of the language used to describe Uma's precipitate actions seen as the very antithesis of the boatman's warnings, as she 'sprang' off the prow and 'plunged' into the deep water. Most candidates noted the writer's use of the simile comparing Uma's sinking to that of an inanimate, heavy 'stone', and they were able to unravel its effect quite accurately.

At this point, candidates noted that the excited 'screaming' that preceded Uma's jump is replaced by screams of fear and dread once Uma has 'disappeared', albeit not for long, thereby acknowledging an aspect of the writer's craft. Some candidates commented upon the very brief span of time indicated by the writer in between Uma's 'plunge' and her reappearance, piecemeal, on the surface of the water. First her sari, and then an arm, then a shoulder was 'hauled out', indicating, as some candidates suggested, that Uma is both heavy and ungainly and took some effort to recover from the water. Many candidates wrote about the writer's choice of simile describing Uma's recovery from the near drowning experience where she is described as being 'like a big, wounded water bird'. A tiny minority of candidates compared the writer's allusion to Uma resembling a 'water-bird' to the colloquial phrase 'like a fish out of water', suggesting that the writer might have had this in mind. However they dealt with the simile, all agreed that Uma was being depicted in a most unflattering way and that large 'water birds' are intrinsically unsympathetic creatures.

Some candidates noted that it took the sound of Aruna's chiding voice 'called out in warning', to rouse Uma from her apparently traumatised state. Some candidates suggested that Aruna's voice was a tipping point for Uma's realisation that her 'bid for freedom' was at an end, and she had been returned to a state of 'captivity', to the realm of the living, the responsibilities of caring for her aged parents and the disappointment of seeing her younger, married sister freed of such ties, but still able to chide Uma and belittle her for her 'occasional fits'.

Some candidates remarked upon the fact that the passage is almost exclusively written in descriptive prose and only punctuated twice with 'speech', rather than 'dialogue'. In the first instance, the 'speech' relays the desperate cries of the women, 'Uma, Uma! Where is she?' after Uma has gone down 'like a stone'. The second example of speech is Aruna's 'warning' exclamation, 'Uma, don't! Don't you dare, Uma –'. As a number of candidates remarked, these were hardly tender words of sisterly joy or relief at Uma's rescue, rather an admonition and a kind of threat of untold consequences, should Uma 'dare' to 'fit'. Some candidates commented that even her traumatised state, Uma felt it necessary to appease her younger sister 'with a pleading, pacifying look' as a promise to Aruna not to 'fit'. A number of candidates pointed out the effect of the repeated plosive consonants within a phrase that described Uma's silent plea to her sister.

It was the final paragraph, as so often, that proved to be a discriminator between candidates' achievements. Many candidates could not apparently bring themselves to believe the words on the page; that Uma, rather than feeling relieved and grateful for being saved from drowning, actually wept because she had been saved. Instead of being allowed to continue experiencing the 'exultation' and thrill of being clasped and dragged by the flow of the river, the writer bluntly states: 'they had saved her'. Unbelieving candidates read, instead, that Uma's 'shudder and cry' came from relief and not from disappointment. Some very sensitive readings of the final paragraph were seen from candidates who perceived Uma's experience as being very close to being embraced by the current. The choice of the words and phrases 'drew her', clasping her' reminded some candidates of language that might be applied to a lover or partner, bringing into Uma's dull world, a darker, wilder, more thrilling experience in the 'tight' embrace of the current.

Candidates who appreciated that Uma's experience was told by an omniscient third-person narrator, rather than by Uma herself, as many candidates concluded, seemed more willing to accept Uma's misery at having 'what she had always wanted' and 'had been preparing to do all her life' snatched from her by being saved. Candidates who read carefully and quoted 'The saving was what made her shudder and cry' also found all the evidence in the foregoing paragraphs to support that apparently incredible fact. Whether candidates had understood Uma's feelings or not, most attempted to make something of the final part of the last sentence. Some saw the morning sun as a blessing on Uma and a reminder that life was worth living; others saw the

sun as indifferent to Uma's feelings, rising as ever, and shining indifferently upon the boat, the pots and the women's white saris, bought especially for the ritual bath, floating around them in the water.



# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/42</b> <b>Unseen</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

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## **General comments**

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Candidates are expected to show overall knowledge of the content of the text they have chosen. The introductory rubric, if carefully read, provides information necessary to avoid errors of understanding, especially of the situation in the prose extract. The bullet points can help to give structure to candidates' responses, and they encourage close attention to descriptive language and to interpretation of the text. However, what Examiners assess is response to the stem question, which is always focused on the writing and on how the writer creates effects for a sensitive reader. Responses which are purely narrative cannot gain marks in the higher levels, which require response to the language of the text. The question asks how, not what. Too many candidates still begin their essay with an almost verbatim rehearsal of the question followed by the bullet points and a list of literary devices, which may or may not be present in the text and the candidate's response. The introduction should be an opportunity to show overall knowledge of the text, its subject matter, themes or characters, key developments, tone and mood, before exploring in detail how that tone and mood are created.

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caesura for any pause including in prose or at the end of a line of verse. Some candidates attempt to impress using extremely obscure Latin or Greek rhetorical terminology when simply referring to repetition (ideally spelt correctly) would be just as highly rewarded. It is not the identification of devices which matters, but the quality of commentary on their effect. Comment on structure has become much more evident in candidates' responses. This is a welcome development, but just like comment on language it needs to be linked to meaning, and to the progression evident to the reader of the text. Those able to link structural features to accurate awareness of narrative or poetic form, and thus to the writer's choices and how they shape meaning for the reader, were especially likely to achieve the higher levels. The higher levels in the mark scheme expect critical understanding, which entails sensitivity to the way the text has been crafted for deliberate impact on the reader.

Exploring how the text works should drive interpretation of why the writer wrote it, and what they expect the reader to feel. That is what is meant in the syllabus by AO4 (personal response). The tone and mood of texts chosen at this level is likely to involve some complexity, ambiguity and even irony. Examiners are experienced with candidate work at this level and trained to be alert to different kinds of interpretation. Indeed, they welcome alternative readings, if those are informed by attention to details of language and accurate interpretation of meaning. Personal responses which are highly subjective and not grounded in critical response to the writer's methods are less likely to be effective, and good personal response is integrated throughout the answer, rather than simply forming the basis of concluding paragraphs.

As ever, the preciseness of analysis of language techniques was a discriminating factor in determining a level. Candidates who could identify patterns and make links between devices/textual evidence to explore the ideas being presented by the writer produced successful responses. Candidates should use reading time to identify unusual images and uses of language, while exploring the whole structure of the text: our first impressions, how the text develops and how it ends. Candidates who make insightful comments on the final stanzas or paragraphs of text, and how the ending of the text relates to its overall structure and progression are more likely to achieve high marks. Similarly brief but strong introductions and conclusions, which do not simply repeat points made elsewhere but show insight into the meaning and purpose of the writing are clear indications of a strong script.

Examiners are skilled in engaging with the meaning of candidates' work even if their written English is not always clear: we assess the quality of the process of making meaning from literary texts and do so without a prescription for an 'ideal answer'. However, the work of Examiners is much easier if candidates write legibly, avoid references to line numbers without quotation, and organise their paragraphing and expression clearly and concisely, without the need for asterisked footnotes and addenda.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

The poem 'Just by Chance' by the young Irish poet Ed O'Dwyer, from his collection *The Rain on Cruise's Street*, proved incredibly popular on this paper, being attempted by over two-thirds of candidates, even exciting interest on social media. Teenage candidates obviously enjoyed the description of a first kiss and rose to the excited lyrical pitch of the moment. Most took the poem at face value, as a first-person memory, addressed to his partner as a 'love letter' some felt, looking back with nostalgia to observations, feelings and thoughts at that moment, in that place. Most enjoyed the cinematic scene-setting and the clichés of romantic love, while a few, perhaps more perceptively, queried the stage management of the setting, and found the irony of repeating the mantra 'just by chance' until it became contradictory, especially when it was clearly part of the very deliberate plan of the poem. A few noticed that the partner takes the initiative both in interpreting the appearance of the swans and inviting the kiss and read the moment more ironically as something of a conscious set-up, at least on the partner's part.

Whatever the conclusions drawn about the overall impact of the poem, its romantic atmosphere is clearly established in the opening stanzas. Candidates who read the introductory rubric carefully were aware that the poem is set in the past and describes a memory after the event. The poet's choice of tenses is also a clue. However, some misread 'we have been coming to since' and thought this was a place that he and his partner had often frequented before, rather than after, that first kiss. Many noticed the anaphora of 'This is the place...this is the hour' but fewer identified the effect of such rhythmical and almost incantatory scene-setting, although many felt that the scene was magical, and the encounter fated (rather than 'just by chance') thanks to the fortunate conjunction of the constellations, and the adjective 'glittering'. Quite a number of candidates thought 'the stars were out that first night' was personification, as if they were partying; many, more convincingly, noticed the internal rhyme and contrast of 'night' and 'light' as if the heavens were shining

on that encounter. Some commented on the realism of the use of place names (although some thought Shannon was the name of the poet's partner). Better scripts tended to comment on the interesting adjectival choice of 'lurching' contrasting this with the clarity and apparently 'suspended' stillness of the heavens; one or two suggested that nature was 'eavesdropping on the moment', some, perceptively, commented that this might be a transferred epithet and it is the poet's emotions that are 'lurching' at this moment.

Most candidates wanted the romantic setting to be as real as it appears, with some interpreting the bridge as symbolic, or the stars as indications of a fatal attraction, some citing 'star-crossed lovers'. As one candidate put it: 'the symbols of the stars contribute to the theme of destiny, by symbolising directions and fate.' A few, misreading 'quay' thought the lovers were standing on the bridge, spotlighted by a 'suspended' moon, and some wanted to explore the symbolism of a moon 'near-full' and yet to achieve its completion. Others noted the staginess of the scene, as if this were a movie set, or linked these first two stanzas to later references to how 'that average Wednesday/Limerick was the most romantic place ever'.

Candidates enjoyed the opportunity to engage with sounds as well as sights, in sensory readings of 'the most brittle silence', noticing sibilant and dental sounds, or the effect of enjambment within and between stanzas, as the silence is broken by movement first, not words. The gentleness of the gesture of speaker to partner was often noticed, although a few questioned whether the physical contact was quite as accidental as he claims. Some puzzled over the absence of question mark for this rhetorical question 'did I think to remove': some thought this showed unreliable memory, or a questioning of his own intentions. Several noticed the sensory effects of 'brushed' and 'shook'. Most assumed it was the partner's shoulders which 'shook' but a few, noticing his nervousness, questioned whether this might be the speaker who shudders.

Either way, the arrival of the swans is clearly intended to be a turning point, and most stronger answers noticed that this coincides with the only rhyming couplet in the poem. Coupling is encouraged by 'the pair' of swans, the paring of the couplet form used throughout the poem, and how the symbolism of the swans is interpreted. Candidates wanted to associate the swans with the 'romantic' clichés of Valentine's Day cards, but it is probably significant that the idea they 'mate for life' is introduced by the partner who subsequently suggests that the speaker kiss them.

Those who paid careful attention to the drama and dynamics of the moment realised it is quite incorrect to suggest that the partner simply remains silent and passive. Although the poet does not use direct speech, he makes it quite clear who initiates the kiss 'there and then', and suggests the partner may even be the driving force behind the stage management of the encounter. Candidates were more likely to see fate as playing a hand here, expressed through various ways in which nature was not just a spectator but almost an active participant in the scene, ensuring that 'everything was perfectly aligned'.

A few noticed that there is an irony about Limerick being romantic, some aware that its associations are more with comic rhymes, and most noticed how the quotidian had metamorphosed into the extraordinary that night. Stronger responses not only read the meaning of each line over the line endings but looked at verse patterns and realised that enjambment physically dramatises movement towards the kiss, helped by 'the arbitrary direction of a convenient wind'. There was sensitive commentary on the plosives and alliteration which conveys this climactic moment, emphasised by the way 'we kissed our first kiss' almost as if it is immediately repeated. This climax seems both inevitable and 'just by chance'. Several noticed that the partner's face 'staring back at me' was more likely to illustrate mutual attraction than a sense of surprise.

Surprise versus fate became the debating point in candidates' responses to the final bullet point. This proved successful in encouraging them to pay attention not only to the structural principle of the poem, but also to evaluate its meaning. Most candidates were content to elide chance and fate, and feel that such a constellation of chances was more than coincidental. They tended to look at the lexis of happenstance – 'chance', 'arbitrary' and 'convenient' as ironic. A surprising number, in the twenty-first century context, wanted to see 'chance' as a form of divine intervention. Others read the poem more literally, as an expression of how the everyday can be transformed by love and by memory of a romantic moment, supported by the poet's frequent use of superlatives. Both interpretations are valid and were well-rewarded if suitably supported by textual evidence and close reading. Some were more sceptical of the staginess of the encounter (one candidate wrote that the poem was 'flipping the tables on the romantic genre tropes') or were more philosophical about how things could 'happen so perfectly and yet just by chance'. A smaller number looked at what was disconcerting about the syntax as well as structure of the poem, in contrast with its graceful sense of movement, and used this to ask questions about the reliability of our memory and how our emotions can transform what we think we see and feel. The best responses realised that the three parts of the poem, descriptive, dramatic and philosophical, are all connected, and made sure their personal interpretation was grounded in a critical response to the writing and its effects. As one candidate put it: 'Just like in every stanza there is chance, in every part of his life chance had a role to play.'

## Question 2

Responses to the extract from Maggie O'Farrell's historical novel about Shakespeare's family, *Hamnet*, showed intelligent and empathetic engagement with the drama of the eleven-year-old boy's search for help for his sick sister. Most were able to appreciate how his love, panic and hopes are represented through the urgency of expression as well as situation. Some made connections with more recent pandemics, and all were able to appreciate his concern for Judith and uncertainty about her future if she is a victim of the plague. Few seemed troubled by the historical setting and most entered into the spirit of the times.

It was easier to achieve those higher marks with appreciation of how much the reader shares Hamnet's perceptions of places and people: although the writer uses third-person narration, she deliberately limits us here to Hamnet's perspective. This becomes most obvious in his description of the words, actions and appearance of the woman who comes to answer the door, and this is the reason why we sympathise with him so much. Stronger candidates noticed the short sentences, repetitions and simple syntax, and some noticed that this mirrors the expression of a young child. Good responses also tended to notice that the whole passage is written in the present tense, bringing the drama of the moment to life for us.

The short first paragraph provided plenty of material for immediate analysis: the repeated bangs on the door are separated by Hamnet's thoughts about Judith. It's more likely that looking at his hands 'brings Judith's to mind' because they are so similar to those of his twin than that she has already been displaying signs of the plague. Most noted the onomatopoeia of 'bangs' and the ascending tricolon of 'he thuds, he thunders, he shouts' but better responses needed to add commentary on the effect of the rising tension on the reader, reinforced by sound effects, and metaphor. One candidate thought that 'thunders' represented 'the storm inside him'. Other patterns were also noticed, such as the short, breathless phrases and sentences and repetition: as one candidate put it 'the repetition of the pronoun 'he' highlights it is just him, as an individual, attempting to get help for his twin at only 11 years old.' Many commented on how his violent movement when he 'leaps forward' and puts his foot in the door also shows how urgent this is for him, and how desperately he wants help. When he 'swallows, hard' the writer gives a physical indication of his disappointment at the woman's reaction.

Most had plenty to say about the woman who is the gatekeeper to the physician. Some speculated unhelpfully about her identity, but most realised that she is initially angry with Hamnet for the noise he makes and the action of 'shaking a cloth at him ... like an insect' suggests she thinks him insignificant and irritating. A few thought the reference to 'a racket loud enough to wake the dead' was ironic in view of the possibly fatal consequences for Judith. Candidates with a clear understanding of the text identified the shift from the language used to show the woman was irritated and impatient to gestures that show her recognising the seriousness of the situation Hamnet is narrating. Some noticed his more polite language – 'Please. I'm sorry, madam. I need the physician' – or the way he is almost stammering out his short sentences, as if in fear or panic. Many noted the turning point as the moment 'she looked at him with care, with attention' as these words seem the opposite of her earlier attitude.

Several strong candidates noticed that the woman's expression becomes as breathless as Hamnet's: 'A fever? Has she buboes? ... Lumps. Under the skin. On her neck, under her arms'. It is as if she no longer has time to waste, and several noticed the signs of pressure about Hamnet's observations of her appearance. Some suggested that her 'frowns' suggest she is as concerned about herself as about Hamnet, hence the reference to the 'encroaching' foot in her doorway. A few even wondered if she really intends to send the physician or if this is just a ruse to prevent Hamnet from entering the house. Most, however, took her at face value, and noted that even as her frown 'deepens' and 'her face is pinched' she speaks to Hamnet 'not unkindly', recognises who he is, and appears to bless him at the end. However, the imperative of 'Go ... Go home. Now. Leave' gives the reader a clear sense of her fear, accompanied by the way she 'propels' him out of her house, suggesting her first instinct is self-preservation. Candidates, influenced by the writer's use of Hamnet's standpoint, made their own judgements about how sympathetic or 'motherly' she really is.

Stronger responses usually had something to say about the boy's response to her word 'buboes', with its 'vaguely vegetal overtones' suggesting something nasty (certainly for many 11-year-olds), and even sinister. The extended metaphor describing how 'a cold fear rinses down through his chest, encasing his heart in an instant, crackling frost' received extensive and sensitive analysis from the writers of the strongest responses, seeing Hamnet's heart and emotions receiving a chilling alien invasion, as the fear starts to take him over and chill him. One candidate suggested that the word 'rinses' seems to wash away all his hopes.

This metaphorical moment of realisation sets up the surreal and almost hallucinatory, anxiety-filled descriptions of the final section, in which Hamnet seems to see the world differently. Some candidates commented perceptively on the difference between how everything seems to have changed for him ('more glaring, the people louder, the streets longer') and yet in reality it is just the same, as 'the horse still stands at its cart'. Many commented on how the sky seems hostile to Hamnet through the choice of the word 'invasive', as if nature has turned against him. One candidate commented that: 'the urgency of Hamnet's return is juxtaposed with his new-found shift in perspective, meticulously noting the small things in life.' Some saw this as indication that 'the world is cruel and unaffected'. One candidate suggested that 'this links back to his heart being encased and builds a semantic field of suffocation with the attempt to deal with unknown possibilities which lie ahead.'

Some even referenced the stages of grief in Hamnet's denial of the fatal implications of the word 'buboes': 'It cannot be. It cannot'. Many looked very closely at how the repetitive patterns change from attempts at denial towards prayers for redemption: 'Someone will be home ... by the time he gets to the front door. By the time he opens it' etc. Several thought this might be a prayer for a future that may never come, and most saw this as a further expression of his isolation and need for adult help: 'There will be an answer'. Many, probably rightly, saw these hopes as naïve and proof of his immaturity in the face of death and an uncertain future, but most agreed it was proof of his desperation and of his love for his sister. Some perceptively commented on how this shows how we are taken inside Hamnet's rising panic as he denies the truth of his awful realisation, desperately hoping that someone will be there to take away the heavy burden of responsibility which he feels.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/43</b> <b>Unseen</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

- The question always asks candidates to focus on the writing; the bullet points can help to structure a response but an overview of the whole text is expected.
- Quotation should support knowledge and understanding; quotation is most effective when short and embedded within commentary.
- The focus of commentary should be the effect of the writer's choices of language, form and structure, not simply the identification of devices.
- Personal response could be focused more on why the writer wrote the text; good responses were critical as well as personal.

## **General comments**

Examiners reported seeing many enthusiastic and effective responses to each of the texts set for the paper and were struck by the prevalence of answers that suggested a real engagement with the writing. It is always particularly interesting when Examiners see equal numbers of responses to poetry and prose, and disappointing when centres appear to restrict candidates to just one genre: the time allocation for the paper includes 20 minutes for reading and planning, which gives candidates time to make a choice. Prose texts offer different opportunities for analysis, with more focus on narrative technique rather than lyrical expression, and can broaden centre's development of their candidates' analytical skills, and awareness of how structure as well as language shape meaning. These skills, of course, can also sharpen candidates' analysis of their set texts, especially their responses to extract-based questions. This paper itself tests all the Assessment Objectives for Literature in English, which will be addressed in the paragraphs which follow.

Candidates are expected to show overall knowledge of the content of the text they have chosen. The introductory rubric, if carefully read, provides information necessary to avoid errors of understanding, especially of the situation in the prose extract. The bullet points can help to give structure to candidates' responses, and they encourage close attention to descriptive language and to interpretation of the text. However, what Examiners assess is response to the stem question, which is always focused on the writing and on how the writer creates effects for a sensitive reader. Responses which are purely narrative cannot gain marks in the higher levels, which require response to the language of the text. The question asks how, not what. Too many candidates still begin their essay with an almost verbatim rehearsal of the question followed by the bullet points and a list of literary devices, which may or may not be present in the text and the candidate's response. The introduction should be an opportunity to show overall knowledge of the text, its subject matter, themes or characters, key developments, tone and mood, before exploring in detail how that tone and mood are created.

The interpretation of meaning from surface to a deeper level is the key to achievement of Assessment Objective 2 in this paper as in other parts of the Literature in English syllabus. Good quotation technique is one way in which candidates can demonstrate deeper understanding. Beginning a sentence or paragraph with a quotation might allow for identification and even analysis of techniques, but it is unlikely to show interpretative understanding or the development of critical argument. Weaker responses tended to be over-reliant on lengthy quotations, expecting the textual reference alone to demonstrate understanding but better answers used shorter, more focused quotation as a stepping stone to critical commentary.

Precision of analysis of language techniques is usually a discriminating factor when Examiners determine the level that a response has reached. Many candidates spent too long listing or simply identifying rhetorical features of the text without commentary on their effect. There was also some confusion about the meaning of technical terms: imagery was often used as a label for almost any form of descriptive writing, personification for almost any kind of metaphorical suggestion, anaphora for almost any repetition (even in prose) and

caesura for any pause including in prose or at the end of a line of verse. Some candidates attempt to impress using extremely obscure Latin or Greek rhetorical terminology when simply referring to repetition (ideally spelt correctly) would be just as highly rewarded. It is not the identification of devices which matters, but the quality of commentary on their effect. Comment on structure has become much more evident in candidates' responses. This is a welcome development, but just like comment on language it needs to be linked to meaning, and to the progression evident to the reader of the text. Those able to link structural features to accurate awareness of narrative or poetic form, and thus to the writer's choices and how they shape meaning for the reader, were especially likely to achieve the higher levels. The higher levels in the mark scheme expect critical understanding, which entails sensitivity to the way the text has been crafted for deliberate impact on the reader.

Exploring how the text works should drive interpretation of why the writer wrote it, and what they expect the reader to feel. That is what is meant in the syllabus by AO4 (personal response). The tone and mood of texts chosen at this level is likely to involve some complexity, ambiguity and even irony. Examiners are experienced with candidate work at this level and trained to be alert to different kinds of interpretation. Indeed, they welcome alternative readings, if those are informed by attention to details of language and accurate interpretation of meaning. Personal responses which are highly subjective and not grounded in critical response to the writer's methods are less likely to be effective, and good personal response is integrated throughout the answer, rather than simply forming the basis of concluding paragraphs.

As ever, the preciseness of analysis of language techniques was a discriminating factor in determining a level. Candidates who could identify patterns and make links between devices/textual evidence to explore the ideas being presented by the writer produced successful responses. Candidates should use reading time to identify unusual images and uses of language, while exploring the whole structure of the text: our first impressions, how the text develops and how it ends. Candidates who make insightful comments on the final stanzas or paragraphs of text, and how the ending of the text relates to its overall structure and progression are more likely to achieve high marks. Similarly brief but strong introductions and conclusions, which do not simply repeat points made elsewhere but show insight into the meaning and purpose of the writing are clear indications of a strong script.

Examiners are skilled in engaging with the meaning of candidate's work even if their written English is not always clear: we assess the quality of the process of making meaning from literary texts and do so without a prescription for an 'ideal answer'. However, the work of Examiners is much easier if candidates write legibly, avoid references to line numbers without quotation, and organise their paragraphing and expression clearly and concisely, without the need for asterisked footnotes and addenda.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

Based on the poem 'Hurricane' by Mir Mahfouz Ali, this question produced a high standard of response with extremely few weak answers. Candidates responded with empathy and engagement while displaying sound and often excellent analytical skills. A number of scripts attained marks at the top of Level 8.

The focus of the question was on how the poet vividly conveys the impact of the hurricane. The bullet points invited the candidates to look at how he conveys the force of the hurricane, how he portrays the fears of the children and how he conveys his thoughts and feelings about what has happened to the community. Almost all candidates demonstrated knowledge (AO1) through reference to the text of the power and speed of movement of the storm as depicted by the poet. The majority were able to work through the storm's destructive effects on the family home. Developed responses also considered the damaging effects on the wider community and the landscape.

Most candidates showed a clear understanding (AO2) that the poet was writing about an experience of his childhood. There was a grasp of the magnitude and severity of the storm and the children's feelings of terror and confusion in response to its impact. Many explored the children's perception of the storm as a form of punishment from God for their sins, even if they could not comprehend what sins these might be, and their pleas for divine forgiveness. Strong scripts also engaged with other deeper implications of the poem such as the emotional and psychological trauma suffered by the children and the wider community.

In terms of critical exploration of the writing (AO3), most candidates worked their way chronologically through the poem with many producing detailed and developed responses to the ways in which the poet creates effects for the reader. Many essays started particularly strongly with an examination of the initial presentation

of the storm as a wild beast, powerful and aggressive in its intent. Candidates focused on the connotations of the verb 'roared' in the opening line and how this is followed by a particularly striking metaphor – 'a glass bull charging with its horns'. Much sensitive work was done on the somewhat surprising use of the adjective 'glass' in relation to such a potent representation of animalistic ferocity and bulk, with some candidates pointing to how the transparency and invisibility of the storm would only add to the apprehension of those people unlucky enough to stand in its path. Others imagined the poet suggesting the torrents of rain to be shards of glass hitting land with explosive and catastrophic force. As suggested by the reference to 'roared' earlier, candidates were adept in looking at the use of aural as well as visual effects, the ominous, drum-roll cacophony of 'pounded' standing in sharp contrast to the later all-pervasive silence of the storm's aftermath.

Similarly close, attentive work was carried out on the stanzas which detail the stripping away of the house and the family belongings. A continuation of the poet's use of strong verbs was seen in the phrase '...roof rip off' with the simple monosyllabic and alliterative diction adding to its impact. Many highlighted the force of 'vanished' with its suggestion of a world of security and familiarity being taken in the blink of an eye, almost as if by a trick of magic. Again, there was some excellent comment on how 'One by one' was left hanging at the end of a line and stanza to create both narrative suspense but also to convey the storm's step-by-step methodical demolition of the children's home. Candidates saw the pace of the destruction being enhanced by the use of enjambment both here and elsewhere and also by the listing of the domestic possessions over three lines as they literally and metaphorically 'take flight'. Some candidates focused on the books which were blown away while others chose to comment on the poignancy of the toys and other objects of childhood which disappeared, the 'sisters' dolls' and 'brothers' cricket bats' giving a personalised sense to the loss as well as suggesting for some the loss of childhood and its innocent pleasures (AO4).

Some particularly strong scripts identified a brief moment of hopefulness in 'We thought the worst was over' a sense of calm and orderliness being suggested by the sentence neatly fitting into a single line. This hiatus, however, is succeeded by the 'giant waves' and their 'snatching us/from the arms of our mother'. Many candidates registered cruelty and malice in the personification here, with some pointing perceptively to how the enjambment across the stanzas reinforces the children's sense of a violent and irreparable separation from maternal security and love. Candidates commented on the poet's lively use of simile in 'tossing us like cheap wood' and how this emphasises both the children's lightness in face of the force of the storm and also their sense of vulnerability and worthlessness. Likewise, strong scripts explored the connotations of 'shrivelled' together with what some saw as the dehumanising implications of 'shuddered like old engines'. Understandably perhaps, few candidates quite managed to demonstrate a clear grasp of the meaning of 'rattled to the point of rapture', with a number reading the last word in the line as 'rupture'.

The quality of comment on the final five lines of the poem proved something of a discriminator. Strong scripts explored the metaphorical implications of 'The sun came very late that day' and the vivid visual image of the children 'trapped in a wind-sheared tree'. A number of candidates discussed the irony of the damage inflicted by a natural phenomenon on Nature itself, linking the earlier images of the uprooted trees and dead animals to the absence of birdsong and the eerie, disturbing silence of a world denuded of life. Some candidates saw in the absence of the muezzin's calling for prayer the withdrawal of God himself and the suggestion of a spiritual as well as physical and emotional wasteland (AO4). The concluding sentence and its striking image of silence as 'the new disease' repaid close examination. Some candidates were perhaps guilty of somewhat loose reading in identifying the hurricane itself as the metaphorical disease while strong scripts explored imaginatively the potentially long-lasting and corrosive effects on the community of a silence bred of fear, grief and unspeakable loss.

In terms of broader personal and interpretative response (AO4), some strong scripts traced the disparity in power between Man and Nature through the course of the entire poem in an admirably coherent and persuasive manner. In a similar vein, some candidates pointed to religious faith being depicted as an emotional 'crutch' in times of crisis but as ineffectual in resisting natural forces. Some candidates read the poem as a stark warning of the ecological and humanitarian dangers of global warming. While such a reading sometimes led to a lively and impassioned conclusion, however, the absence of direct textual evidence limited its effectiveness.

## Question 2

Based on an extract from a short story 'Something Childish But Very Natural' by Katherine Mansfield, this question elicited responses which were a pleasure to read in their lively engagement with the text, particularly when they were alive to the many humorous aspects of the situation and the manner in which the writer presents it.



The focus of the question was on how the writer makes the encounter between the two young people so entertaining for the reader. The bullet points invited the candidates to consider how she portrays Henry's thoughts and how he speaks to Edna, how she portrays Edna's reactions and how the writing conveys a sense of rising tension towards the end of the passage. Almost all candidates demonstrated knowledge (AO1) of the situation of a chance meeting on a train and the events which follow either through direct textual reference in the form of selected quotation or a blending of narrative and comment relevant to the question. There were very few scripts which were purely narrative in character.

Candidates showed understanding (AO2) of how Henry is immediately captivated by what he sees as Edna's remarkable beauty and how he is swept away with feelings of boundless admiration and heady excitement. As they begin to speak to each other, Henry becomes convinced that a relationship or 'bond' is forming in 'some mysterious fashion' between them. Crucial to clear understanding here, and indeed to effective critical analysis (AO3) and a convincing personal reading (AO4), was a grasp of the narrative perspective employed by the writer. Although, the narrative is written in the third person, the point of view is largely that of Henry. Events are filtered through his eyes, through his thoughts and feeling to which, as readers, we have direct access. In contrast, such access to the girl's inner world is denied to us. We, along with Henry of course, must infer her thoughts and feelings from her gestures, actions and words. It is in what the reader might register as the potential mis-match between Henry's high-flown and exuberantly romantic state and Edna's much more composed and controlled demeanour that much of the deftly comedic quality of the situation lies.

Well-developed responses traced the development of the interaction between the two characters with close attention to the features of the writing (AO3). Candidates were generally strong in analysing the writer's portrayal of Henry. Most commented on how his heart is seen to 'thump and beat to the beat of the train' and top-level scripts traced how the characters' interaction, and Henry's emotional response to it in particular, is mirrored in the course of the train's subsequent movements; when it 'dashed into a tunnel' and went 'shattering through the dark'; as it 'slowed down and the lights outside grew brighter'; as it 'stopped'. Some outstanding scripts drew out the possible metaphorical readings of these elements with an admirable deftness of touch and sensitivity. Other points of focus included the repetition of the exclamatory 'How beautiful she is!' and the singing of his heart and how it 'swelled bigger and bigger and trembling like a marvellous bubble'. As always, a key distinction lay between scripts which simply registered the use of a simile, vivid or otherwise, and those which began to explore what the image might suggest in terms of the character's feelings – the gorgeous sense of expansiveness but also of delicateness and fragility and a nervousness that this wonderful moment might suddenly burst. Henry's heightened pitch of thought and feeling was seen as also being conveyed by his repeated questions to himself ('What was happening between them?') and by how his words 'flew from him'. Even the periods of silence between them are felt by Henry to be 'alive and warm'.

Comment on Edna was perhaps less consistently assured which was understandable given her somewhat enigmatic portrayal. It is a sense of mystery, indeed, which first draws Henry's attention – 'She sat so quiet, hidden in her falling hair' and 'her grey eyes under the shadow of her hat'. For many, 'her eyebrows like two gold feathers' were suggestive of her regal appearance or how delicately precious she had already become to Henry. For some, 'gravely' suggested a coldness of response to Henry's situation rather than a genuine, serious concern although most candidates registered the transition from 'she nearly smiled' to 'really smiling' and 'The smile danced in her eyes'. There was a perceptive response in strong scripts to Edna's polite if naturally somewhat reticent demeanour initially and the gradual suggestion of her essentially warm-hearted nature and intimations of her sense of humour.

As might be expected, candidates' ability to analyse how the writer creates a rising tension towards the end of the passage proved something of a discriminator. As alluded to above, some strong scripts foregrounded the ways in which the movement of the train shapes the pace and drama of the characters' interaction and Henry's increased sense of urgency, in particular. There was some excellently close work on the dialogue and the use of exclamations, stammering and self-questioning again to convey Henry's desperation as well as what 'She said breathlessly' might convey about Edna's response to the situation. Some top level scripts commented on the brevity of the last three sentences and the cinematic quality of their respective points of focus. One particularly sophisticated response observed how the syntactical structure of the concluding sentence allowed for a dramatic emphasis to be placed on the final word of the passage – 'gone'.

As stated at the outset, candidates engaged with the characters and the situation and appeared to enjoy writing about the passage. Most saw it as a charming, entertaining and funny portrayal of love at first sight and responded warmly to Henry's youthful impetuosity and naively romantic and passionate nature (AO4). A number of candidates stated explicitly that they were 'rooting' for him and hoping that all would come good in the end. In this regard, some picked up on Edna's reference to herself as a 'fatalist' and took this as a cue to speculate on the role fate or destiny might play in drawing the two protagonists together in the future or in

separating them forever. A few candidates read the passage in a rather darker light, finding Henry's admittedly somewhat forward behaviour towards a young woman he had never met before unsettling, even threatening. The imperative 'Look here!' and the italicised force of 'I *must* see you again' were read as coercive and controlling. In this light, Edna's abrupt exiting of the carriage became an act of flight.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 0475/05</b> <b>Coursework</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- focus explicitly on the task set
- use relevant, concise references to support analysis
- analyse in detail ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have only a basic knowledge of surface meanings
- lose focus on the task
- make unsupported assertions
- list techniques without analysing precise ways in which writers achieve their effects.

## **General comments**

There was much evidence of coursework of a high standard this session, where candidates showed a personal and evaluative engagement with texts. There was much evidence that candidates had enjoyed studying their coursework texts and had taken the opportunity to develop their skills of researching, drafting and presenting their assignments.

The most successful assignments sustained a clear focus on a carefully worded task which enabled candidates to meet the requirements of the highest levels. It is important that tasks direct candidates to analyse ways in which writers achieve their effects. Where tasks did not do this, candidates tended to treat characters as real-life people (rather than fictional or dramatic constructs). Guidance on effective task-setting can be found in the Coursework Handbook.

Some less successful responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text, though lacked a clear focus on the task. Some candidates were intent on listing themes they had studied, though with an inconsistent focus on the task. It is worthwhile repeating the guidance to teachers that they remind students of the importance of selecting material in a way that directly addresses the task set; every sentence should contribute to the relevance of the unfolding argument. This skill will help them in their preparation for the examination papers.

As in previous sessions, the most convincing and persuasive essays sustained a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects (Assessment Objective 3), relating their points to the task. Some poetry assignments logged features such as alliteration, caesura, enjambment and ABAB rhyme schemes in poetry essays though without exploring how the writer uses these devices to convey their ideas. A key message for candidates approaching their assignments in this way is that feature logging is not the same as critical analysis.

Several centres submitted empathic responses, with the necessary information supplied: 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. Candidates should be permitted to select their own character and moment for empathic responses to encourage personal responses to texts.

## Guidance for teachers

It is important that centres comply with the requirements of the Coursework folder, which are set out in the syllabus. For example, assignments must:

- select from the whole prose or drama text (and not focus exclusively on individual chapters or scenes)
- be based on texts that have the same level of demand as IGCSE set texts.

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 insufficiently challenging command words such as 'Describe' and 'Explain'. Teachers within the centre should together discuss the appropriateness of proposed tasks before they are given to candidates. This enables any problems with proposed 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. This provides information to the external moderator about how the final mark was arrived at. Avoid words such as 'superficial', 'thin', 'brilliant' and 'wow' which do not feature in the level descriptors.
- Provide a brief explanation on the assignment itself or on the 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 allows a centre to justify its award of marks. In some cases, the original teacher's marks were more accurate than the internal moderator's.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided: excessive ticking (for example, of every paragraph or every line); hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality; labelling by assessment objective. Simply putting the supposed relevant AO in the margin 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 wording of the levels descriptors.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently, using the current version of the Individual Record Card, and securing it by treasury tag or staple to allow easy access to candidate work. 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 final 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.