

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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

In successful responses, candidates:

- address the key words of the question
- write relevant personal responses informed by their detailed knowledge of the text
- support their responses with well-selected supporting references
- explore sensitively and in detail ways in which writers achieve their effects.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- refer in general terms to 'themes' they have studied without focusing on the key words of the question
- show only a basic grasp of surface meanings and are overly dependent on explanation and assertion
- use long quotations or a list of shorter quotations without comment on specific words
- log writing devices without exploring the effects created, particularly in poetry responses
- made general comments in their closing paragraph about a text's 'reliability' in ways that detract from their response either to the question or text.

General comments

There was some evidence of assured work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where the most successful candidates showed some insight and individuality in their responses to poetry questions. Most candidates were familiar with the layout of the paper, though there were examples of candidates answering several questions rather than two. Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting; this is essential in communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners, and it is important that teachers remind candidates about this.

The strongest responses showed the ability of candidates to select relevant material for the question that had been set. This is an essential requirement of the examination: questions should not be seen as mere prompts for candidates to unload all their knowledge about the poem or character or theme or setting mentioned in a question. The strongest responses to poetry and passage-based questions showed that candidates selected their material carefully whereas in less effective responses candidates wrote exhaustively as they worked their way through a poem or prose extract in an explanatory manner, losing focus on the question.

Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. As observed in previous reports, this is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Some candidates wrote a brief plan before starting their answer, and this often led to a more effectively organised response. There were, however, many candidates this session who pursued strategies that were less effective. These included the writing of lengthy introductions that focused on biographical information about the writer and/or that offered a random list of devices used by the writer. In some responses, candidates were determined to work their way through 'themes', sometimes alluding to several themes within one paragraph, ignoring the specific demands of the question. The idea that listing key themes, regardless of the question, will lead to high reward is based on a misguided assumption; it is important that teachers remind candidates of this.

The most convincing personal responses embedded concise textual references to support the points being made. Those candidates who had learned a range of direct quotations to use in answering the prose general essay questions performed more strongly than those who had insufficient textual detail upon which to draw and who had, therefore, to rely on general assertions.

The most successful responses showed sustained critical analysis of ways in which writers use form, structure and language to convey their ideas. Less successful responses, particularly to poetry, simply logged devices without close analysis of *precise* ways in which writers use them to create *specific* effects. Once again, this session, the most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesura, often with broad comments made about an increase in, or slowing down of, the pace of a poem. There was an increase in candidates making simple and unproductive statements about rhyme schemes (e.g. 'ABBACC'); regular rhyme schemes were variously claimed to show the regularity of a person's life, the happiness of their character or the intensity of their grief. Such comments rarely rose above the level of basic generalisation and were not rooted in the specific detail of the text.

Some candidates referred candidates to line numbers in poems and extracts without quoting the actual words they intended to support a point they were making. Some candidates used ellipses to shorten quotations but in a way that omitted the key words that would support the point being made. Candidates should be taught how to integrate concise supporting quotations into their response.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

More successful answers responded thoughtfully to elements such as the contrast between the speaker's former life of freedom and his current 'wrecked' state, his changing relationship with his body, and the pathos of him hugging himself for protection. Many were careful to distinguish between his regret for his illness and his evident continued appreciation of the 'world of wonders' which he had been able to enjoy despite its risks. Most commented on the metaphorical 'shield' and/or the 'avalanche', both of which were useful at eliciting a personal and individual response, and the fact that the speaker's suffering was both physical and mental/emotional. Very few commented on the consistent physicality of the language. Less successful answers claimed that the speaker got what he deserved for his previous sexual experiences and/or drug-taking and was now regretting his earlier behaviour.

Question 2

Most answers showed some understanding of the speaker's admiration for the baby. The more successful answers were able to understand how the speaker's feelings of wonder and awe were expressed through her enumeration of external and internal details of the baby's body and responded to aspects of language such as the use of precise medical terminology, the focus on close observation, and the contrast between complexity and 'blunt' habit. Less successful answers tended to assume that that quotations in themselves made the point rather than considering word choice and effect.

Question 3

More successful answers focused on the power of the speaker's contradictory emotions and the frequent paradoxes. The most successful argued that this was a powerfully accurate representation of the confusion caused by 'love'. Less successful answers clearly struggled with the unfamiliar language. However, even these answers noticed structural elements such as the anaphora of 'I', with the stronger answers using this as an example of the poet's self-absorption. Some answers quoted lines from the poem and asserted that they were 'powerful' or 'used powerful words' without explaining what they meant by this. Some candidates introduced their answers with some general background information about the poet and Anne Boleyn, but this was extraneous to the question as they rarely made any meaningful connection between this and their analysis of the poem.

Question 4

Most candidates understood the central metaphor of 'time's irreversible river' and 'the dark pool below' and responded convincingly to the language and tone of the speaker. They showed appreciation of how the poem was 'moving' and recognised some of Edmond's techniques. Less successful candidates tended not to address the whole poem, selecting one or two stanzas for discussion. Sometimes the focus of these answers was solely on the literal sense of the words – the movement of the water.

Question 5

More successful answers focused on the details of the contrast and made thoughtful responses to the implications of the metaphorical 'fossil', 'sun', and painting on a wall. A few also responded to the sounds of the language, particularly the alliteration in the fourth stanza, and there were some good responses to the jaguar's ability to see himself as free. Less successful answers misunderstood parts of the poem, such as who was running in stanza 3, or what the 'stroller with the nut' meant. There was a tendency amongst these candidates to impose possibly pre-learned themes such as a message about human behaviour or the morality of caging animals. This did not relate to the given question which was to focus on how Hughes makes this such a vivid poem.

Question 6

The most successful answers provided an enthusiastic and informed personal response to the visualisation of the moon in the first verse, particularly the resonance of 'doubloon', and to a lesser extent, the implications of the sounds evoked in the second stanza. There was also much discussion of the religious elements of the poem, and its contrast between the people's response to the moon and that of the cows and sheep. Answers that were not as developed explained how similes and metaphors work and identified examples in the poem. Most were, however, able to say something useful about the personification of the wheat in the final stanza, or to notice how unusual it was to have a red moon or something sinking upwards.

Section B

Question 7

More successful answers were able to identify and explore several different emotional elements of the text, covering Kambili's fear, Papa's self-importance, Auntie Ifeoma's grief and anger and Kambili's difficult relationship with her cousin Amaka. There were some effective personal responses to the ways in which an 'already emotional moment' was turbo-charged by Papa's crassness. Some also picked up significant details such as Kambili's reference to a 'puff of heathen smoke', Auntie 'throwing a curse', and Kambili's perennial wish that she had been brave enough to do what Jaja did and wrote perceptively about their emotional resonance within the novel as a whole. Successful answers also wrote sensitively about the way Kambili had internalised Papa's rules to the point where she still did what he wanted even when he was not there. Less successful answers wrote about the novel's themes such as colonisation and Papa's cruelty with little explicit attention to the question. Some answers misread the opening paragraph of the text and applied everything Kambili says about Amaka to Auntie Ifeoma instead.

Question 8

There were very few responses to this question. Those that were presented tended to be a mainly narrative account of Kambili and Jaja's time in Nsukka. The strongest of these showed an understanding of how Nsukka represented freedom and was key to transforming Jaja's and Kambili's sense of independence. Overall, essays lacked detailed reference to the text and relied on assertion.

Question 9

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 10

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

More successful answers were able to respond thoughtfully to the narrator's obsession with Rebecca and her tendency to compare herself unfavourably with Maxim's former wife, demonstrating her lack of self-esteem. There were some detailed and sensitive discussions of how the narrator obsessively relives every previous criticism and comparison, putting the worst possible spin on it. Some thoughtfully discussed the ways in which the narrator's feelings were being unfairly amplified by Maxim's passivity and lack of emotional expressiveness, as well as Mrs Danvers's pathological determination to maintain Manderley as a shrine to Rebecca, and a few noted the irony and pathos of the narrator deciding that Mrs Van Hopper was right after all. Less successful candidates resorted to paraphrase and overlong quotation rather than giving attention to the presentation or the use of language.

Question 12

There were only a few answers to this question. Those that were seen tended to present a seemingly pre-prepared response about the relationship but without attention to the use of the key word in the question, 'striking'. Quotations to thoroughly support ideas were lacking.

Question 13

Stronger answers focused on the key word, 'moving'. There was understanding of how Ashima missed Ashoke and referenced his image as, 'the last thing she will remove'. Many commented on her feeling of being, 'suddenly, horribly, permanently alone,' and on the way her sense of 'home' had changed over the years. Less secure responses showed some misunderstanding of what was actually happening in the extract, whether Ashima was moving to or from India and indeed where it fitted into the story. These answers paraphrased extensively and relied on Ashima's own thoughts to express her feelings.

Question 14

There were very few responses to this question. Those that were seen mostly attempted to provide a general character study of Ashoke without focus on the key word, 'admirable'. These answers lacked sufficient textual detail and relied on assertion to make their points.

Question 15

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 16

This was again a question to which there were few responses and those that were presented largely wrote a character study of Edith and did not relate their knowledge of Edith to how she could be considered a memorable and significant character. It was recognised that she was the sole witness to the events at Hanging Rock and for being unpopular. Support for ideas was minimal.

Question 17

More successful answers followed Pi's thought processes and picked out elements for particular comment, such as his exclamations, self-criticisms and repetition of the 'mantra' of 'Plan Number Six'. Some also responded to the detailed descriptions of the weather and how these affected or reflected Pi's changing feelings or related the extract to Pi's wider story of determination and survival. Less successful answers focused narrowly on Pi's change of mind from despair to determination and its significance for the novel as a whole, disregarding much of the passage in the process.

Question 18

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

The most successful answers here had a clear focus on the question. They discussed the various ways in which the astonishing and surprising power of the Martians was portrayed by considering in particular the use of sound and visual imagery. These candidates used details from the text effectively to support ideas. Less successful answers provided assertive and descriptive responses to the passage simply paraphrasing the action without explicitly addressing the task or analysing the detail of the passage, assuming that the description of the events is self-evidently proof of the power of the Martians.

Question 20

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

More successful answers responded thoughtfully to the encounter between Mr Shi and his daughter in the extract, and the underlying implications of their conflicting perspectives. Most answers discussed differences

between Chinese and American expectations about marriage and 'good' women, and/or pointed out the contrast in communication between Mr Shi and his daughter against Mr Shi with 'Madam'. Some made effective selections of text to exemplify conflict, notably the 'legs of the chair scraping the floor' as the daughter leaves the room, and the significance of the way she answers, 'without looking up from her food'. The most perceptive answers were able to explain how their understanding of the conflict was influenced by only having Mr Shi's perspective and inner monologue, not the daughter's. Weaker answers paraphrased Mr Shi's thoughts and took them at face value, seeing his daughter as rude and unappreciative. Some were unsure of the events and characters in the story.

Question 22

Candidates who maintained a focus on the key words of the question – 'strikingly' and 'creates tension' – were able to avoid the narrative responses provided by the less successful candidates. The former group focused on how the boarding house, the housekeeper and the room itself contributed to the menacing atmosphere. More detailed references to the detail of the story would have enhanced all answers.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/12 Poetry and Prose 12</p>
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Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The most successful responses offered detailed analysis of Auden's use of words and images at various stages in the poem. Most commented on the use of imperatives, for example, in the first stanza, to 'stop' time, noise and communication in preparation for the funeral. The dominant use of commands later in the poem were also explored: 'put out'; 'pack up'; 'pour away'; 'sweep up'. Most commented on the use of personification in 'moaning' and 'scribbling'. Less successful responses worked their way through the poem, explaining rather than analysing or simply listing various themes they had studied without relating their comments to the key words in the question.

Question 2

The most successful responses focused on the key words 'such an intriguing poem', with many questioning the motives of the caller inviting the receiver of the call to express their feelings and wishing them 'a nice day' at the end of the poem. There was much evidence of analysis of the voice and tone of the caller and of the exaggerated language used to describe the prize: 'Ultra-super Global Special' and 'retrospective Chances Module'. Most candidates grasped the idea of a prank or trick call, with some commenting on the cruelty of the caller. Less successful responses re-told the story of the poem without focusing on either the question or analysing the ways in which Adcock achieves her effects.

Question 3

Most candidates commented on the speaker's loneliness and linked this to the question's key words 'such a sad poem'. They commented on his poor health and how he regards himself as a failure compared with others. The most successful responses were able to support their ideas with specific details from the text, leading to a close analysis of the conversational and self-pitying tone of the speaker. Less successful responses showed evidence of not having read the poem with sufficient care. Some candidates offered a stanza-by-stanza description of the poem, overly dependent on assertion rather than close analysis of ways in which Shelley makes the poem so sad. There was also much unproductive labelling of the rhyme scheme.

Question 4

The most successful responses explored ideas about truth and honesty, self-control, lack of envy, having a good conscience and a belief in God. They also commented on the speaker's innocent pursuits of reading and associating with friends. These responses were able to explore relevant aspects of language and structure, for example, the religious diction and the poem's list-like structure. Whereas these responses tailored their material to the focus of the question ('ways in which Wotton strikingly conveys his thoughts and feelings'), less successful responses paraphrased the content of the poem without close analysis of effects. Examiners commented that some responses included significant misreading.

Question 5

Most candidates understood what the relic is and that it is washed up by the tide. There was at least some understanding that the sea has no regard for living things. Only the strongest responses were able to explore the irony of the jaws being eaten, the imagery of death and violence, and the darkness of tone and atmosphere. In these responses, there was a generally clear focus on the key words 'intriguing poem'. Less successful responses picked out words and phrases and commented on them, often in an overly assertive way without addressing the question.

Question 6

This was the more popular of the two questions on Hughes's poetry. Most candidates acknowledged that the poem is a monologue by the hawk, an omnipotent God-like figure asserting himself over nature. He was regarded as an 'apex' predator who is very powerful and single-minded. The most successful responses explored the ways in which Hughes conveys the hawk's arrogance about its right to kill and its complete sense of entitlement. These responses explored the sustained first-person perspective, the violence of the imagery and the language of dominance conveyed in short, assertive sentences. Less successful responses paraphrased the poem's content or made simple generalisations about enjambment and caesura without specific examples or analysis.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates were able to contrast Eugene's violence and proclivity to abuse in the family home with his professed faith in Christianity. They observed that the passage marks a pivotal moment in the novel when Jaja's defiance leads to a more independent mindset. The most successful responses commented on the physical appearance of Papa and the deliberate and sinister quietness of his voice showing his intention of intimidating Jaja; they explored too the effect of Jaja's deliberately confrontational statements and the symbolism of the smashed figurines. These responses were able to contextualise this moment within the wider novel. Less successful responses worked through the passage describing the tension without exploring the detail of how Adichie makes the moment so dramatic and significant.

Question 8

Candidates generally were able to identify key ideas about the characters' different attitudes towards their father, religion and disciplining their children. Most contrasted Eugene's wealth and Ifeoma's relatively poor living conditions. There was also comment on Eugene's strict observance of religion compared with Ifeoma's more easy-going attitude, and the contrast in the children's reactions to their parents, shown in the fear of Eugene and affection for Ifeoma. The most successful responses were able to recall a wide range of apt quotations to support their ideas and use them as a means of analysing closely Adichie's use of language. Many candidates who did not have such recall of textual detail were less able to explore qualities of the writing and relied on overly assertive answers.

Question 9

Most responses showed an understanding of the moment in the passage and awareness of its position within the wider novel. They grasped the fact that Pip rescues Miss Havisham without regard to his own safety and understood Miss Havisham's regret and desperate plea to be forgiven. The most successful responses pursued the idea that Pip's selflessness involved assisting a woman who had done him much harm and explored the ways in which Dickens conveys Miss Havisham's shrieking, the later 'terrible vivacity' of her voice and the significance of Pip's kiss. Less successful responses worked through the passage describing events rather than analysing specific textual detail.

Question 10

The most successful responses considered both the imbalance of power within the relationship and the comic dimension of the relationship early in the novel. Most candidates were able to pick out details from the text showing Mrs Joe's harsh treatment of Joe, her belittling him and physically attacking him with the Tickler. Many pointed to Joe's admirable loyalty to his invalid wife later in the novel and to the oddness of the relationship. The strongest responses included a range of direct quotations which candidates used to support their ideas and to explore Dickens's use of language. Those without such detail fared less well,

having to rely on general references and overly assertive comments. Some candidates were distracted away from the question into commentary on Pip's relationship with Joe and Mrs Joe.

Question 11

The most successful responses explored revealing details in the passage, such as the narrator's monosyllabic replies, Mrs Danvers' body language and Favell's boldness and sense of entitlement. These responses commented on the use of first-person narration and the deeper implications of this moment. The strongest responses explored the unsettling aspects of the relationship between Danvers and Favell, with hints at complicity revealed in the flashed look of warning and his winking at Danvers. Less successful responses worked through the passage, often merely re-telling the story and not addressing the focus of the question. Some responses were more intent on listing relevant themes of the novel rather than exploring the detail of the passage and addressing the question. A few candidates did not know who Favell is.

Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Most candidates showed some understanding of this moment's position within the wider novel and recognised Ashima's severe distress in being without family or support. The most successful responses commented that, whereas Ashoke is eager to be supportive, he is nonetheless the one who had left the dirty dishes for his wife to come home to. These responses recognised in his dismissal of Ashima's concerns his own desire for them to stay in America. Some less successful responses referred to themes such as clash of cultures, integration and isolation though without relating their ideas to the question's key words 'such a powerful moment'. Less successful responses offered narrative and overly assertive approaches, with a few candidates showing insufficient engagement with the detail of the extract. A few candidates wrote about the novel as a whole and ignored the extract.

Question 14

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

Most candidates showed at least some understanding of the moment: the repercussions of the picnic, the headmistress creeping around in the middle of the night, and her memory of her last conversation with Sara. The strongest responses commented on the description of Mrs Appleyard's true appearance as 'an old woman' beneath 'her battledress of steel and whalebone' and on the flashback to her vision of Sara and her awful cries. These candidates commented on the immediate context of Mrs Appleyard having just murdered Sara and disposed of her body. Less successful responses often lacked a secure understanding of events in this and recent moments of the novel. In these responses, candidates tended to describe the content rather than analyse closely ways in which Lindsay makes this such an unsettling and significant moment.

Question 16

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 17

There was general understanding that Pi is facing the reality of sharing a lifeboat with a tiger as he imagines ways in which Richard Parker can easily kill him. The most successful responses focused on 'vivid impressions of Pi's state of mind' and explored the effects of the rhetorical questions that emphasise his hopeless plight and the repetition of 'we fight' to show his determination. Many candidates noted the graphic descriptions of Richard Parker's paws and fangs that hinted at Pi's possible fate. Less successful responses needed to develop their ideas in more detail to address the focus of the question and to make greater use of detail from the text to support their ideas. The weakest responses simply described the content of the passage.

Question 18

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

For the few responses seen, candidates showed at least some understanding of the passage and its position within the wider novel. Approaches tended to be descriptive rather than closely analytical. The relatively stronger responses were able to explore ways in which Wells conveys a sense of panic and attempts to escape from 'the world gone mad'. Some candidates commented on the contrast between the balmy and peaceful evening and the frenzy of the following day, referring to the sounds described ('clamour of bells', 'running in the street', 'drumming and trumpeting').

Question 20

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Most responses showed an awareness of the setting of the family gathered for the reading of their father's will and of the children's mistaken assumption that they will have to 'do something' about their mother. The stronger responses explored the lack of affection within the family and the superficial expressions of the children's concern for their mother. The most successful responses selected relevant material from the extract and other parts of the story to address the question's key words 'revealing' and 'significant'. These responses explored aspects of language, structure and narrative viewpoint. Less successful responses re-told the story without focusing on the question. Examiners reported that some candidates had an insecure grasp of key details about both the mother and the will.

Question 22

Most candidates showed at least some general understanding of the character and relevant events in the story. They observed that the boy accepts Mrs Jones's kind but rough treatment of him and that he comes from a deprived background. There was little evidence of close analysis of the detail in the story which made it difficult for candidates to address the question: 'Explore the ways in which Hughes vividly portrays...' Without a sufficient range of detail, candidate responses often did not move beyond a descriptive approach. This set text comprises ten stories from *Stories of Ourselves: Volume 2*; candidates need to have a detailed knowledge of the stories (including direct references) if they are to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/13 Poetry and Prose 13</p>
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Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Many candidates took a philosophical approach to this poem and considered the contrast between the sudden death of the fly and the unexpected nature of death for humans. Many commented on the beauty of the fly compared to the normal negative perceptions of flies as conveyors of dirt and disease. Stronger answers engaged well with the link of the death of the fly and human mortality and evaluated language features such as the metaphor of the book, the imagery of the wings or the exaggerated positive description of the fly. Less successful responses tended to repeat their ideas about death and could have explored a wider range of features in the poem.

Question 2

Candidates were generally well informed and considered the ways the poem was powerful such as the determined, relentless and sinister nature of the planners. There was an understanding of how the planners are deliberately manipulating the public into accepting their ideas. Stronger answers effectively analyzed a range of the writing features such as the dental and mathematical imagery, the images of, 'anesthesia, amnesia, hypnosis', the personification of the sea and skies or the alliteration and oxymorons: 'grace of mathematics', 'dental dexterity', 'history is new again'. Some sensitively commented on the disappointment of the poet and the Singaporean people at the loss of their cultural history. Less successful answers noted writing features without deeper analysis. A few were sidetracked into writing about the environmental issues raised by the planners' constructions.

Question 3

Most candidates understood the endless search of the poet for an elusive lover. Stronger answers engaged with the language, for example, the symbolism of the physical hunt or the presence of the woman in the surroundings. These answers focused on the key word, 'intriguing', providing relevant textual support. Less successful answers were tempted to speculate on what had inspired the poem, which resulted in some assertions. Some commented on the poem at a literal level only.

Question 4

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 5

Many candidates understood that the fox represented the writer's emerging thoughts and the process of creative inspiration. Candidates generally noted the context of the dark, lonely night in which the writer was struggling for inspiration. What differentiated candidates was the degree and quality of analysis. The strongest answers commented on the movements of the fox and linked these to the creative process and explained why this was 'fascinating'. These candidates appreciated literary features such as the clock's loneliness, or the empty sky and explored what these features might mean. Stronger candidates commented on the last lines of the poem and how the ending was different to the beginning. Less successful answers

tended to log features without explanation and did not respond to the key word. A few discussed the fox as a real animal, without linking it to the emerging thoughts of the writer.

Question 6

Most candidates showed some understanding of the concept of nature and beauty in the poem and the contrasting ideas of urban and rural life. Stronger answers understood the magnificence and unchanging nature of the horses and they noted that the encounter was an exceptional, disturbing experience. These answers engaged deeply with language features such as the descriptions of the cold dawn or the violence of the sunrise. They noted the contrast between the stillness of the horses and the typical movement in nature. Less successful answers offered more literal readings, and some did not mention the horses at all.

Question 7

Candidates focused on the physical responses of Kambili's fear: her stomach, her breathing and attempts to eat. Many commented on the unfairness of being punished for coming second. Successful answers appreciated Kambili's viewpoint and the suspense of waiting for Papa to open the envelope. They noted the detailed description of Papa's room as a haven of comfort and plushness contrasted with the abuse of Papa. Less successful answers tended to focus on Eugene and presented a character sketch. Some candidates spent too much time discussing the effects of colonialism and religion without pinpointing how these impacted the question.

Question 8

The few that responded to this question showed an understanding of Amaka's character. Stronger answers recognised her as a positive female role model for Kambili. They noted that she was larger than life and quick witted in comparison with her more repressed cousins. They commented on her negative traits such as her spitefulness at times towards Kambili. Less successful answers presented a straightforward character sketch with little analysis.

Question 9

Most candidates showed an understanding of both characters, picking up on Pip's ambitions to become a gentleman and his feelings for Estella, and Biddy's common-sense attitude. Stronger answers understood that Pip's comments were thoughtless and insulting to Biddy in contrast to her replies which were kind and even gently sarcastic. They commented on Biddy's patience with Pip, her desire not to hurt his feelings and how she was concerned that Pip's aspirations would lead to disappointment. Stronger answers picked up on the deeper implications of Pip's plucking and throwing away the grass and emphasized the contrasts between the way Biddy and Pip speak of themselves. Less successful answers worked through the passage without delving into deeper meaning or noting the subtle but gentle sarcasm of Biddy's replies.

Question 10

The few candidates that selected this question presented relevant arguments to support their answers. Candidates viewed Miss Havisham sympathetically, exploring her sad back story and breakdown but also commented on the negative aspects of her long-term manipulation of Estella and Pip. Her final hope to atone and be forgiven was commented on. Candidates showed understanding beyond the bare bones of the story and appreciated some of the writing features such as the descriptions of the rooms or the significance of the fire.

Question 11

Most candidates understood how the passage is 'frightening' and picked up on points such as the naivety and innocence of the narrator or the sinister manipulation of Mrs Danvers. Many noted Mrs Danvers' obsession with Rebecca. Stronger answers commented on the horror of the narrator considering jumping to escape the feelings of inadequacy. They appreciated the literary features in the passage such as the gothic elements, the physical sensations such as the 'damp and clammy' atmosphere, 'the white mist' or the increasingly urgent commands from Mrs Danvers 'to jump'. Less successful answers tended to track through the extract and sometimes went off onto a character sketch of Mrs Danvers. Some responses did not explore the passage deeply enough and missed opportunities to explore literary features.

Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Many candidates considered why the passage is disturbing and noted points such as Moushumi's unhappiness with the evening, the unwelcoming atmosphere in the restaurant or Gogol's lack of awareness. Stronger answers explored the clues to the relationship between Gogol and Moushumi linking points to the marriage breakdown. They commented on the detailed description of the restaurant and appreciated how the language reflects the mood. They noted Moushumi's thoughts and feelings, explaining how these linked to events later in the novel. Less successful answers fell into retelling the passage, often with a lot of quotation, but no analysis of how the passage presented the experience. A few answers revealed limited knowledge of the text overall. A few candidates interpreted the passage as a commentary on race relations.

Question 14

The few candidates who selected this question generally understood Gogol's attempts to distance himself from his past and commented on points such as his relationship with Maxine's family, his name changes and his changed attitude towards the end of the novel. Successful answers included a range of relevant supporting details. Some less successful answers showed only a basic understanding of the text and were limited in their supporting evidence.

Question 15

Many candidates struggled to pin down the 'moment' although they were aware of the events in the extract. They noted the introductory setting, the contents of the letter to Dianne, the arrival of Irma and the disturbing letter from Leopold. The strongest answers managed to link the events in the extract together and explored aspects such as the relationship between Irma and Dora, the atmosphere of the college or the significance of the demanding letter from Mr Leopold. Less successful answers tended to retell what happened in the extract. Some of these responses listed pre-learned themes, for example, colonialism, nature and exploitation, and tried to use these to answer the question. This resulted in random, unconnected sentences to fit pre-learned ideas at the expense of addressing the question.

Question 16

Although only a few candidates chose this question, most answers were personal and thoughtful with evidence of thorough preparation. Strongest answers considered the question and provided detailed points to support their argument, for example, that Mrs Appleyard's death was a suitable ending for her, that Albert was justly rewarded, and that Mike has followed his heart.

Question 17

Most candidates understood the serious physical and emotional condition Pi and Richard Parker were in, and Pi's realization that death was near. Stronger answers explored the implications of the diary entries and the refreshing effect of the rain. They commented on the impact of the final lines, in which the 'pens ran out', not the paper. Some of these considered the close bond that had developed between Pi and Richard Parker and commented specifically on Pi's care for Richard Parker and the wonder of being able to touch him for 'the first time ever'. Less successful answers tended to retell the events in the passage and did not consider the question.

Question 18

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

Most candidates showed some understanding of the violence in the passage although did not always link this to the question's key word 'dramatic'. Stronger answers understood the ruthlessness and anarchy of what happens after the Martian invasion and commented on the drama of the screaming and fighting and the appearance of a revolver. They explained the reasons for the violence, the breakdown in society and the implications of these. They understood that the drama came from the potential violence of the attack and its impact. Less successful answers picked out a few details from the passage though did not respond to the

key word 'dramatic' and sometimes lapsed into retelling the events. Some attempted unsuccessfully to include pre-learnt ideas about Social Darwinism or colonialism and empire though without tailoring their material to the demands of the question.

Question 20

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Most candidates understood that the passage is about the young man's desperate search for his lost love. Many commented on the landlady who was seen as a malevolent character, happy to lie to the young man rather than accept any responsibility. The most successful answers evaluated the details of the setting, picking up on the unpleasant language used to describe the city, for example, the general wetness of the atmosphere, suggestive of decay and death. They also explored the language used to describe the land lady ('her throat seemed lined with fur') and the disgusting house with hints of evil in the references to imps and devils. These answers selected relevant points from the passage to consider the key word 'intriguing'. Less successful answers tended to describe the contents of the passage rather than closely analyze the text or select points to answer the question. Some candidates spent too long on the homeless at the start of the passage. Examiners reported that some candidates did not seem to understand key elements of the story.

Question 22

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/21 Drama 21</p>

Key messages

- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph, sustained the link, 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.
- In passage-based questions, successful answers briefly stated the context of the passage, selecting relevant material from the whole passage, and analysed both content and the use of language, structure and staging.
- Successful answers to the discursive questions maintained focus on the question and could refer to specific incidents from across the whole text, making relevant and developed points.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.
- Candidates must adhere to the exam requirements for Paper 2 to avoid creating a rubric infringement and losing marks.

General comments

There were some well-developed answers with a perceptive grasp of authorial choices and a critical understanding of the plays' concerns. Most candidates showed a good recall of the plots, enjoyment of their set texts and evident engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they feature.

The main issues in less successful answers on these texts were: a narrative or descriptive approach saying what happens (usually accurately) but without comment and analysis; lengthy focus on small details, for example exclamation marks or individual words, at the expense of range, and lengthy explanation of social context which often distracted from the task or was applied in a superficial way. There was considerable 'ploughing through' the passages line by line rather than judicious selection of the most significant elements to answer the question.

The most popular text was *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* followed by *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Othello* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. *Death and the King's Horseman* was the least popular text. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, and were aware of the text as performance, showing an appreciation of stagecraft, mood and tone, and considering likely audience response.

With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. It was pleasing to see that introductions were shorter, but some candidates still included lengthy plot summaries before engaging with the question and moving onto directly relevant material. Others listed literary features to be covered in their essay, such as repetition or rhetorical questions, which also constituted an unproductive way to start a response. In discursive essays it is more helpful for candidates to write a sentence or two, referencing the question, and giving a brief overview of the key points before moving swiftly on to develop them in the main body of the essay. In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage, is a more helpful way to start an answer.

The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the given extract, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points were missed. 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. Brief essay plans often helped candidates to cover a range of pertinent points and to select apt textual support. Less successful answers had a shortage

of specific textual detail to support points which left little scope for analysis and resulted in a basic retelling of the plot. Narrative or descriptive approaches gain limited reward.

In both passage and discursive essays selected details were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range. Candidates less adept at organising their answers often spent too long on relatively minor points and so missed out on the chance to develop more relevant points. The most successful responses struck a balance between developing their analytical points, ranging across the text to give coverage, and relating their points to the authors' ideas and themes.

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 the dramatic impact created. Even when candidates have not seen a performance of the play, it is important to consider the impact of characters' appearance and interaction on stage or offer their own personal response. Candidates should remind themselves that, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation and alliteration in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created, is unproductive. Some weaker responses gave undue focus to stage directions, out of context of the accompanying dialogue, when it is the combination of the two which conveys meaning and creates effects.

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.

There were many brief responses and several rubric infringements where candidates answered two passage-based questions rather than one on each text. In this case, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded.

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. They should also be aware that using the passage to answer the discursive question is unlikely to contain much to reward.

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.

Centres are reminded that in 2025 the texts *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* will be replaced by *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney and William Shakespeare's, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) This was the most popular question on the paper, with few choosing the discursive option for this text. Most candidates found it accessible and made relevant comments about the girls' shock at the arrival of Godfrey with Gerte and recognised the significance of racial segregation in America and the post-war historical context. Stronger responses demonstrated knowledge of the context of Godfrey's absence from the house, the allusion to bringing '*order to things*' following his earlier conflict with Lily, and the surprising nature of this union given Godfrey's grief and attitudes to racial mixing. They considered Godfrey's and Gerte's contribution to the scene, the abrupt introduction, awkward gestures and signs of nervousness. The strongest answers discussed staging, as well as linguistic effects, the girls' angry outbursts contrasting with Godfrey's calm demeanour and Gerte's hearty laughter, the formality of Gerte's '*practised*' speech, Ermina's leg-twitching, the breaking of the fourth wall and Ernestine's unusual directness. Some saw the significance of Ernestine's reference to Gerte '*laughing in our doorway*', invading the family space, although the cinematic allusions were rarely considered. Some strong responses considered Lily's reaction to the news in the context of the earlier scene signifying her own desire for a relationship with Godfrey. Very few mentioned the dramatic blackout at the end as contributing to the shock and leaving the audience

on edge, anticipating further conflict. It was interesting how few responses referred to the audience experience, and that, despite having greater knowledge than the characters regarding the origin of this relationship, we too are shocked by this revelation. Others considered how pathos was elicited for Gerte being the victim of racism, in context of a play where this is a key theme, and also the role of humour, Gerte's laughter and Ermina's sarcasm, in alleviating tension. The strongest connected the moment to the broader themes of loss, identity, and familial disruption in the play.

Less successful responses did not go beyond simple expression of the girls' hostility to Gerte and restricted their answers to the shocked reaction to Gerte's ethnicity and the family's recent bereavement. Such responses tended to narrate or paraphrase the passage and showed little understanding of the characters, or the dynamics between them, beyond what was revealed in this extract, focusing on surface-level reactions without delving into the subtext. There was some attention to the language of the text, for example the abruptness of '*she white*', but often literary features were mentioned without development, for example Ernestine talking to the audience, but without explaining its effect, or quoting that Godfrey speaks '*defensively*' and the girls are '*dumbfounded*' but without comment.

- (b) Most candidates had a definite appreciation of Lily as a lively and unconventional character and they cited her clothes, her determination to enjoy herself by drinking and dancing, and how her values contrasted with Godfrey's. The more successful responses understood how this bold and outspoken character helps create tension and dramatic moments, recognising her role in the narrative and her importance as a counterpoint to the insulated and traditional Godfrey, extolling activism rather than prayer in the face of injustice. Many recognised that her flirtatious and free-spirited personality challenges societal norms of the time and that she encourages both girls to broaden their horizons, though few explored at any length her interest in politics and her world view. Ernestine's essay on communism, and the tension it creates in the family, featured in several responses.

In the best responses, candidates could substantiate such points with detailed reference and could evidence how the character contributes to the key ideas the play is exploring, and to the audience's dramatic experience. The most perceptive responses noted Lily's vulnerability beneath her confident exterior, identifying a further layer of complexity and that the audience's perception of her character may evolve throughout the play. They referenced Lily's financial instability, her questionable grand claims and the poignancy of her end, delivered in The Epilogue. The most successful answers used specific textual detail and a range of reference from across the text to illustrate how she commands strong feelings and different reactions within the narrative.

Weaker responses described her character, her unexpected arrival in the family and gave a general account of the different perspective she offers, but many found it difficult to articulate why this made her '*dramatically compelling*'. Precise detail, reference to specific moments and how Lily is characterised through her actions and speech, was lacking in many answers which resulted in general character sketches with little discussion of methods used by Nottage for dramatic impact. Some responses framed their ideas solely around contrasting the character of Lily with that of Godfrey, which offered salient material but often led to a limited range of points and overlooked her interactions with Ernestine and Ermina. Lily's direct and colourful language was often mentioned or quoted, for example '*Her way of speaking tells a lot about her*' but not related to the question or developed.

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

Question 2

- (a) This was the more popular of the two questions on this text. Most candidates were able to identify Simon Pilkings' dismissive attitude to other cultures and, indeed, to religion in general, and some discussed the significance of his dismissive reference to the '*costume*', and '*the man*' as referring to Elesin's arrest. They noted how Pilkings prioritises the ball above the imprisonment of Elesin and undervalues his responsibility for this grave issue citing it as '*nothing to worry about*'.

The strongest answers evidenced the contrast between Simon's high anxiety and excitement about the Prince's visit with his reduced concern for Elesin's potential suicide. They identified the theatrical contrast between the Pilkings' lighthearted conversation and the gravity of the play's themes, recognising the cultural insensitivity in their banter, which deepens the dramatic tension. They explored the flippant and casual arrogance in Pilkings' interactions, which reflect his colonial

mindset and his dismissive attitude toward indigenous culture. Stage directions from the end of the extract were fruitfully used to evidence the light mood. The strongest also explored the implications of this behaviour and the political ramifications of his actions in the wider play, using the extract as a springboard to discuss Soyinka's broader themes of colonialism, cultural clashes and abuse of power. Some higher level responses identified and explored the discernible differences between the attitudes of Simon and Jane Pilkings, giving a nuanced response to Jane's playful yet sharp dialogue, showcasing her support for Pilkings while subtly challenging him.

In the weakest responses, however, there was an insecure understanding of what was happening in the extract and misunderstandings regarding Joseph, the reason why an apology from Simon was warranted, and the identities of both Amusa and the Prince. Many struggled to engage with '*striking impressions*' and offered a character sketch of Simon or discussed the Pilkings as a unit without differentiating between them. Few offered a personal response or considered audiences' potential reaction to the attitudes represented. A few responses featured a lengthy discussion of colonialism which was relevant to this question but was often not closely anchored to the extract and to the officious and flippant comments from Simon.

- (b) Too few responses seen to comment.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) This was a very popular question on the paper and it was accessible, to some extent at least, to all candidates who were able to appreciate the key term '*dramatic*' in their responses. Common areas for discussion included Mitch's rejection and Blanche's state of mind. Most candidates identified the significance of the polka music in the wider play and the haunting nature of the Mexican Woman's chant, whilst more developed responses were able to explore the contribution of these elements, and the '*blue*' piano, in some detail, offering valid interpretations regarding the '*death*' of the relationship and Blanche's hopes, and foreshadowing her future demise. The most successful responses sensitively explored the substance of Blanche's monologue and frank confession, Blanche effectively '*coming clean*' about her past, illuminating the central themes of death, desire and the role of trauma. They recognised how Williams evokes pathos for the character both here and in the final moment of '*dropping to her knees*', having been brought low.

The highest achieving candidates were able to focus clearly and critically on the two characters while drawing out key points about language and stagecraft and linking their points to the wider play's concerns, for example the historical and social context of gender expectations shaping characters' actions. They explored Mitch's devastating rejection and moral judgement of Blanche as '*unclean*' which marks a pivotal shift in Blanche's instability, and traced her growing hysteria and how it heightens the emotional intensity of the scene. The more astute noted Mitch's ungallant behaviour, no longer the '*gentleman*' of earlier scenes, finding his intentions as he '*follows her purposefully*' both dramatic and disturbing.

Most candidates revealed a good understanding of the relationship between Mitch and Blanche and recognised the context of Stanley's intervention, but weaker responses were less strong on Blanche's past, the implications of this moment in the wider play and the events at the close of the scene. Most showed understanding of Mitch's rejection, citing Blanche's lies and were able to make something of the fact that she was very disturbed by past events, but weaker responses tended to give a largely narrative account of events. The repetition of '*lies*', '*flares*' and '*fire*' commonly featured in more basic responses as illustrating Williams' language choices which help create drama, but there was less engagement with material in Blanche's monologue and there was some confusion over references to the '*old woman*' in a number of answers. Blanche's state of mind was discussed in most responses, although the interpretations ranged widely with regard to sympathy afforded to the character. Weaker responses claimed Blanche was '*drunk and rambling*', '*talking nonsense*' and acting '*crazily*', giving a superficial reading.

- (b) There were some clearly reasoned and engaged responses to this question. Most candidates were able to identify how Blanche viewed herself as superior to many aspects of her life in New Orleans, including her surroundings, the people she associates with and even her sister. There was much discussion of Blanche's privileged past in the Old South at Belle Reve, the wealth and privilege her family had lost and her past shaping her into believing herself superior. Many mentioned her

disdain for her sister's home, her clothes, and her cultured literary references which contrast with her new surroundings.

Stronger responses could cite specific moments when this sense of superiority is shown, for example Blanche claiming her French ancestry with Mitch or speaking French despite knowing he cannot understand, her letter to Shep Huntleigh and her singling out Mitch as '*superior*' to the other poker players. Many referenced her disdain for the apartment, '*this horrible place*' in Elysian Fields in the opening scene. Several responses analysed her condescension toward Stanley and Stella, asserting that this reflects her belief in her social and moral superiority. They quoted Blanche's insulting language about Stanley being '*bestial*' and '*apelike*' although few noted how the audience are strikingly made aware that Stanley overhears this, creating dramatic tension. Several also recognised the irony of Blanche urging Stella to escape, and indeed her delusions of superiority, given her own straitened circumstances and reliance on Stanley's charity.

Stronger responses addressed the '*sense*' of her own superiority effectively by exploring how this may be a defence mechanism against her insecurities, her fragile ego, or an act to hide her lack of self-worth. Blanche frankly insists she is not '*being or feeling at all superior*' but is '*ashamed to be*' in her current position, having ridden on the streetcar named Desire. The more astute recognised how her insistence on avoiding strong light and her need to bathe reveal her true insecurity rather than superiority, and the importance she attaches to appearing cultured and pristine suggests she conflates physical and social appearance with human worth. Some of the more successful responses saw the symbolism of Blanche's attachment to Belle Reve as a representation of a lost way of life, situating the play in its social and historical context and the fall of the South. They also discussed how the audience's perception of Blanche evolves as her flaws are revealed and her '*sense of superiority*' is dramatically challenged.

Most candidates could reference Blanche's disdain for Stanley and some of the insults used to belittle him, although this sometimes produced a narrow response, focusing solely on contrasting her with Stanley, but neglecting the interactions with other characters such as Stella and Mitch. Some weaker responses were largely character sketches with little focus on the '*strikingly conveyed*' part of the question and lacking precise details from the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Question 4

- (a) The vast majority of candidates were able to engage with the entertaining confusion caused by Oberon's potion and they could explain how the behaviour of the male characters completely bewilders both Helena and Hermia. The stronger responses explored how the dramatic irony supported the humour of the scene and that the fierce competition to prove themselves escalates the conflict between Lysander and Demetrius and adds to the chaos. There was more focus upon, and a more sensitive consideration of, the emotions of the women. The reversal of roles was explored and stronger candidates considered both the pathos and humour created by this scene. Some explored Hermia's heartbreak and disbelief at Lysander's rejection, reflecting her vulnerability. The overblown declarations of love were identified and contrasted with Demetrius' earlier scorn for Helena, whilst others considered the juxtaposition of Hermia's 'sweet love' endearments with Lysander's hateful insults. Candidates noted Helena's ironic tone, believing she is the subject of '*sport*', and considered the possible pathos of Helena's lack of confidence in her ability to inspire love and her abject claim that '*death or absence*' would remedy her situation. One interesting response noted the irony of Lysander's reference to Hermia as '*hated potion*' and his refusal to '*hurt her*' as Shakespeare conveying that Lysander's subconscious clings onto his true feelings for his love and senses the source of the turmoil. The strongest recognised the rapid shifts in tone creating dramatic tension or explored the symbolism of the wood and how this contrasted with the order of Athens. Some considered how the scene conveys how sisterhood is ruptured, and related the scene to the play's broader concerns, the irrationality of love and that the '*course of true love never did run smooth*'.

A number of candidates related the whole backstory of the love potion or narrated the scene, offering accurate interpretations of the emotions of the characters, for example, anger, confusion and betrayal, but with much less appreciation of how these are '*dramatically portrayed*'. Textual reference was often sparse in the weaker responses with limited focus on language choices or how the humorous effects are achieved. When there was some appreciation of how these emotions were dramatically portrayed, the questions of Hermia and the angry exclamations of Lysander were

popular choices. Several candidates interpreted Lysander's demand '*Hang off, thou cat*' as directed to Demetrius rather than Hermia, and very few considered the language of the insults levelled at Hermia in these lines.

- (b) All candidates were able to produce a relevant and personal response to this question. Most responses talked about how the mechanicals had been tasked with performing a play at Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding and their preparations to do so. Some recognised the earnestness of the humble labourers and the humour gained from their unquestioning acceptance of the ridiculous choices made in staging the play within a play. They recognised that their seriousness adds a layer of charm to their comedic antics and may prompt pity or affection from the audience due to their simplicity.

The best responses discussed how the mechanicals broadened the canvas of the play by contrasting them with the wealthy nobles and gave a down-to-earth perspective amidst the magical and noble characters, their problems being minor. They considered the actual performance, the broad comedy of the characters acting the part of props and destroying the illusion for fear of frightening the ladies. Very few included Bottom/Pyramus's prolonged death scene or his mispronunciations and over-reliance on alliteration. Some appreciated the poor choice of play for a wedding and the significance of '*lamentable comedy*' whilst others mentioned Bottom's malapropisms but often lacked support to demonstrate their use. Some responses included the dialogue of the wedding guests, recognising the irony of their mockery, given their own earlier foolish behaviour. The most successful answers had precise textual support and related the mechanicals' efforts to broader themes of performance and illusion. Some considered how Shakespeare self-referentially satirises his own profession and how the mechanicals' play mirrors the main narrative of forbidden love, where tragic potential is overturned and metamorphoses into comedy. None considered Theseus' view of the characters and that he positions the audience to recognise their value, despite their shortcomings.

Weaker responses were able to show understanding of the characters as a source of broad comedy with some textual support but many gave little response to language and struggled to produce a detailed answer. Most restricted their material to the casting scene and commented on Bottom's domination, and that his enthusiastic desire to play all parts was ludicrous, whilst responses which looked at the actual performance, and indeed Bottom's other scenes, had greater range and higher reward.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) This was a popular question and the vast majority made relevant points regarding the moment Othello is propelled to murder his wife, foreshadowing the tragic culmination of events. Candidates who were more successful on this question understood the dramatic irony of the audience's awareness of Iago's plan, our distress at witnessing Iago's devious and assured manipulation of Othello and our fear for the innocent and '*true*' Desdemona. Most candidates effectively referenced Othello's speeches in the extract, many exploring the brutal connotations of the language or offering valid analyses of '*heart of stone*', the '*contaminated*' bed and the effect of repetition. The stronger responses evidenced Iago's tactics in directing Othello to '*see*' events through a particular lens, stoking Othello's jealousy and anger and intensifying the audience's sense of frustration. Some noted Iago's geniality towards Cassio instantly switching to accusations about his '*vice*', his emboldened insults about Desdemona and his imperative call for how she should be murdered. Several offered an interpretation that Iago backtracks in order to appear innocent in '*you must forget that*' and '*nay that's not your way*', when he is actually persuading Othello to put aside any remaining affection for Desdemona, steering him away from viewing her as a '*fine woman*' and steering him to commit to murder.

The most convincing responses recognised the distressing agony of Othello's conflicting emotions, torn between lingering affection for Desdemona and his belief in her betrayal, reconciling himself to this new view of her, evidenced by the contrasting triplet of '*fine*', '*fair*' and '*sweet*' with '*rot and perish and be damned*'. Others recognised that Othello's exclamation '*cuckold me!*', and his violent hyperbole in wishing to spend '*nine years a killing*' his '*officer*' are generated by damaged honour and ego which may create greater distress and pathos for the innocent characters caught up in the tragedy. Some reflected on how Othello's character and nobility have diminished since the first act,

discussing his descent from calm dignity to irrational rage and a warped view of *'justice'*, vividly seen in his graphic imagery of revenge and murder.

Weaker responses narrated events, describing at length the circumstances whereby Othello witnesses Cassio making light of *'his vice'* and Bianca holding the handkerchief. They claimed that the scene was distressing but without addressing how. Most understood the symbolic value of the handkerchief, although again there was sometimes excessive narrative regarding its journey into Bianca's hands and Iago's past manipulation leading up to this point.

- (b) Common areas of focus for this question included the deaths of Desdemona, Emilia, and Othello, of Iago being exposed as a villain and the truth being made clear to the tragic hero.

The stronger answers explored in detail the distress of Desdemona's death and her poignant, unwavering love for Othello juxtaposed by his own brutal dismissal of her as *'a liar gone to burning hell'*. More developed responses explored the emotional impact of Othello's realisation of Iago's deceit, his own tragic flaws and the remorse which leads to his suicide. Only a few proposed that his act provides some sense of redemption and there was very little focus on the language and imagery of Othello's final speech which underscores his tragic stature. Few referenced Iago's survival, his chilling silence and refusal to provide a motive for his actions and that this may be seen as both powerful and surprising, diminishing the sense of narrative resolution. However, Emilia's exposure of the truth and her fatal defiance of her husband featured in many answers and there was a strong personal response to this 'surprise' event, given her subjugation and secondary role in the wider play. A few responses drew attention to Roderigo's end and highlighted that his murder, along with those of Desdemona, Emilia and Othello, is as a result of misplaced trust, a central theme of the play. None discussed the role of Lodovico, Montano and Gratiano as moral commentators, reflecting on the destruction caused by Iago's schemes or providing resolution. A few strong responses connected the play's ending to the wider context of Shakespearean tragedy and established that the themes of loyalty and betrayal converge in unexpected ways in the ending.

In general there was a reliance on recalling the final events but with limited close reference to the language and the dramatic effects achieved. Many candidates appeared somewhat unclear as to where to focus their answers, opting to range across a broad section of the play rather than on the final scenes and some attempting to use the extract from **5(a)**. Weaker responses commented on the violent nature of the ending and the death toll but with limited exploration of how this is made powerful in the light of the play's concerns. Candidates should be advised to link back to the question after describing or discussing an event or detail, and consider what reactions it may produce in the audience or why it is important in conveying the playwright's ideas.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/22 Drama 22</p>

Key messages

- Teachers should refer to the Syllabus during the planning stages of the course for set text requirements to avoid creating a rubric infringement on Paper 2 Drama.
- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph, sustained the link, 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, is an unproductive way to start an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- In passage-based question, successful answers briefly stated the context of the passage, selecting relevant material from the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful answers to the discursive questions, maintained focus on the question and could refer to specific incidents from across the whole text.
- 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

There were some outstanding answers with a sophisticated sense of audience and a detailed exploration of effects. The majority of candidates had a sound grasp of the plots and an engagement with the characters.

The main issues in less successful answers on these texts were: the desire to spot a theme in every paragraph of the answer where this had little to do with the question; including lengthy context or background material distracting from the task, especially in the passage-based questions; a narrative or descriptive approach saying what happens (usually accurately) but without comment and analysis; applying modern idea of feminism or 'the patriarchy' to the texts written in the 16th or 17th centuries. This was sometimes done to great effect but often distracted from the task or was applied in a superficial way. There was considerable 'ploughing through' the passages line by line rather selecting judiciously the most significant elements to answer the question.

The most popular text was *Othello* followed by *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *A Midsummer's Night Dream* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. *Death and the King's Horseman* was the least popular text. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, and were aware of the text as performance, commenting on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved.

Candidates are reminded that with 45 minutes to write an essay there is no requirement for them to write a thesis statement or to retell the plot before answering the specific question. Some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, or plot summaries, before referring to the question, resulting in a loss of focus on the actual terms of the chosen question. In passage-based questions there were many linear approaches which worked through the passage, explaining what was happening, often failing to reach the end so key points were missed. To avoid this, it is 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. 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. These responses looked at the text from an audience perspective and commented on author's 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 in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created, seems unproductive.

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 progress an argument effectively.

There were few brief responses but there was a considerable number of rubric infringements where candidates answered two questions on the same text, or answered two passage-based or two discursive questions rather than one of each. In this case, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded. A few candidates answered only one question.

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. They should also be aware that using the passage to answer the discursive question is unlikely to contain much to reward.

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.

Centres are reminded that in 2025 the texts *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* will be replaced by *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney and William Shakespeare's, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) There were some effective responses here from candidates who appreciated how Lily's arrival shook things up in the Crump household. The best answers focused on the humour, contrasting Lily's approach to life with Godfrey's, and her effect both on him and on the girls, and the entertainment factor in Lily's forthright, bold approach. The girls' responses were considered along with wider issues such as oppression and racism, generally dealt with humorously in this passage. There were some clear evaluations of what made the passage funny.

Much was made of the embarrassment caused by Lily's teasing of Godfrey and her over-familiarity with Ernestine, and some of the most successful answers picked out and analysed the clues both to Lily not being exactly what she claims to be, and to her past history with Godfrey and how Nottage used Lily's dialogue to indicate how Godfrey had changed.

Candidates were less successful where they focused on reference to race when Lily talks about it as they found it hard to link it to the focus of the question. One problem with a significant number of responses lay in the lack of focus on what makes this moment 'entertaining'. Stage directions are also a source of entertainment - for example Ermina's reactions - though these were largely unexplored. Some candidates painted it as a scene of joyful family reunion with no understanding of the tensions or the subtext and how this made it entertaining for the audience with the hints of trouble ahead.

- (b) The most successful answers used specific textual detail and a range of reference from across the text. Most understood the contrast in their characters and aspirations. However, there was often very little on the 'dramatically' of the question and sometimes nothing on the contrast, most often responses produced two character profiles of the girls.

Successful answers commented on Ermina's feisty, social aspects as opposed to Ernestine's quieter and more studious personality. Differences in their responses to their father and Gerte were also cited. Many candidates explored the physical differences between Ernestine and Ermina and commented on their different outcomes at the end of the play. The best answers explored Ernestine's relationship with the audience and how she provides a commentary on events in the play while also noticing that Ermina initially seemed more outspoken. Better answers commented on the way in which Ernestine would address the audience and provide a commentary on events in the play.

Weaker answers misread 'compare' for 'contrast' and focused, for example, on the fact they were both coping with losing their mother, and with the day-to-day racism they were exposed to. A few answers were self-penalising as they focused solely on the passage for 1(a) so rarely made more than a few straightforward comments on the girls.

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

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates understood the market women's adulation and fear of Elesin, with the strongest noting the irony of this in relation to his ultimate failure. Many failed, however, to recognise that his taking offence was a joke and part of his self-interested manipulation contributing to what we learn about his character here.

More successful answers showed understanding of his role and that his behaviour could stop him achieving it and that the Praise Singer and Iyaloja were warning him of this. They looked at stage effects such as the choric chanting, the repetition, the dancing but, in general, the striking dramatic effects of the scene could have been more fully explored.

Some responses failed to see how Elesin teases the women here, and is happy to increase their anxiety levels to feed his ego and his hedonistic impulses, but they did understand their genuine fear of offending him. Weaker responses, while appreciating that the women are unhappy because Elesin is unhappy, failed to explain what he is unhappy about.

- (b) This question achieved a range of responses. The most successful answers explored the personalities of the two men, particularly their flaws, as well as giving an account of what their duties were, as they saw them, and the extent to which they responded to their importance. The question also provided every opportunity to talk about tradition, religion and culture in the colonial context, though the danger here was in contrasting the two world views without maintaining the focus on the two men and what they say and do.

Better answers pointed out some of the ironies in the situation: Pilkings being responsible for two deaths in trying to prevent one, and Olunde fulfilling the traditional role even after having absorbed Western culture.

There was good understanding of the conflicts involved and of the inevitability of failure for at least one of the two characters. There was less success in looking at how the importance was dramatically conveyed. Candidates tended to comment on how they failed in their duty but without fully exploring the consequences of that failure. Only a few responses selected material to focus securely on Elesin's shame and Olunde committing ritual suicide in his place; or his lost honour as a father while looking around to blame everyone else and finally confessing his own failing.

There was often very little written about Pilkings and frequent misunderstanding of his role. However, there was awareness of his duty to stop the ritual going ahead and of his determination to ensure that the Prince's visit and the ball would not be affected. There was also some good understanding of his insensitivity to Yoruban Culture. One common misconception was that Pilkings is a police officer or Chief of Police. He is a District Officer – an administrator. Another was that Yoruba is a place instead of an ethnic group/tribe.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) Successful answers understood the context of the passage. Stanley has discovered the loss of Belle Reve. Blanche, knowing he is suspicious, tries to distract him with her usual flirtatious tactics but this only drives him further away which increases her determination to make an impression on him, and his irritation with her, creating increasing tension. Many understood Stanley's anger and frustration with her tactics and his violent responses possibly foreshadowing what is to come. One strong response pointed out that Blanche does not like 'primary colours' but young, effeminate poetic men – the very antithesis of Stanley. There was some appreciation of Stella's attempt to defuse the situation and of the contrast between Blanche's manner of speaking and Stanley's more blunt responses to her.

Many responses usefully explored the violence that erupts in the slamming down of the bottle, as Blanche tries to deflect the subject of the house, noting how it foreshadows the much worse violence to come. Some candidates focused also on Blanche's motivation here, referencing her past experiences of men; better ones discussed how she might be motivated by guilt or a pathological need to be admired or validated by men; less insightful answers put her behaviour down simply to promiscuity. Stronger candidates were able to make reference to the stage directions in the extract and make valid points in connection with the question.

Weaker answers claimed that Blanche is trying to seduce Stanley or steal him from Stella giving a superficial reading of the text. There is some sexual chemistry but her fake praise of him was read on a surface level.

- (b) This was a popular question with the strongest answers commenting on the stage effects such as the polka tune and blue piano music, the gun shot and the menacing shadows. Many looked effectively at the symbolism of light and the paper lantern, Blanche's excessive vanity and bathing and her desire for 'magic' over realism. The most successful answers were able to consider how her façade deteriorated and how, as this did, her mental state became more unstable.

There was much sympathy expressed for Blanche while exploring her many character flaws and weaknesses. Her lies, her pretentiousness, and her unadvised relationships with younger men were effectively discussed and illustrated. The brutal way Stanley removes her options was also well understood and how her sister chooses her husband in spite of his actions, leaving Blanche utterly exposed and driving her further into neurotic fantasy.

Some candidates focused mainly on discussing how her mental health deteriorated and how different factors played a part, for example, the suicide of her young husband. Less successful answers digressed into a narrative discussion of Blanche rather than exploring how she was a product of her environment

Less successful answers often wrote at some length about the events which had caused Blanche's disturbance rather than Williams's portrayal of it. Some knowledge was shown but narration of the plot is a low-level skill and unlikely to achieve much reward.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Question 4

- (a) The best answers were able to consider how the poor quality of the play caused the reaction in Philostrate and made some insightful comments on the role of leadership and the working classes. They commented on how the play was being described as ludicrous, as the audience knows it will be, and that Theseus generously appreciates the good intention behind it, showing his leadership qualities. They identified the fact that there were contrasts in language 'merry and tragical', 'hot ice' with some knowing the term 'oxymoron' but having identified these they did not always go on to make any point. Some understood that Philostrate was trying to advise Theseus not to watch the performance but the exchange between three relatively insignificant characters proved to be confusing for some candidates.

There was misunderstanding of '*I must confess, made mine eyes water*' with some candidates stating that this was a serious moment as it showed that Philostrate found the play so sad that it

made him cry. Very few candidates understood the humour in Philostrate's words. There was also misunderstanding about his relationship with Theseus.

The weakest answers demonstrated little understanding of the question or text and wrote about the rude Mechanicals and about their rehearsals instead of the actual passage.

- (b) This was a popular question. The most successful candidates avoided telling the story, and gave a wider range of reference than just the opening scenes of the play, supporting points with some direct and accurate textual reference. The best answers referred to Helena's '*two cherries on a stem*' speech, the insults '*painted maypole...she was a vixen...though she be but little she is fierce*' where they mock each other's physical and personality traits, providing the richest source of evidence for the 'vivid' portrayal of the relationship. Some candidates understood the significance of the inferiority/superiority complex of Helena and Hermia. A common approach was to write a character profile of both, making links to their relationship and how it changed due to their love interests. Those who did better focused on the underlying tension inherent from the beginning.

Less successful answers did not know enough specific textual detail to support points leaving little scope for analysis and resulting in a basic retelling of the plot. Candidates need to have memorised a few select quotations to answer the discursive question successfully.

Weaker answers retold the plot and wrote generalised comments about love without much reference to the play. Common misconceptions were that Helena and Hermia were sisters and several candidates mixed up the names of the couples making their argument hard to follow.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) There was a wide range of responses to this question. The strongest answers commented on audience response to elucidate the power and tragedy of the passage. They showed awareness that the dramatic irony is the key. We know Desdemona is innocent and that what she says is true so we feel both exasperation and sorrow at what is happening. The language was explored in some detail, though the power of some of the imagery at the end of the passage '*the eclipse of sun and moon*' was missed as most candidates took a linear approach to work through the passage, failing to reach the end. Dramatic moments such as Desdemona being told erroneously that Cassio is dead and Othello's misunderstanding of her response were considered, though the drama of Emilia knocking on the door was only picked up by a few. The best answers commented on the terms that showed Othello still loved Desdemona.

The symbolism of the handkerchief was well understood and the contrast between this Othello and the one we first see in the play offered strong material. Effective responses also illustrated Desdemona's confusion and panic and Othello's rage effectively. Better responses commented on the changes in Othello's speech patterns and the impact to this and his contradictory language towards Desdemona at this moment, referring to her as both '*sweet soul*' and '*strumpet*'.

Less successful answers focused too much on the context by narrating events and Iago's manipulation rather than the impact of this particular moment in the play and there was also misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Some candidates lost their focus on the extract and wrote extensively about the handkerchief, its origins and what happened to it thinking that Othello killed her with the handkerchief. Candidates thought that Cassio was dead, that Desdemona had given him the handkerchief and that Othello's '*I have no wife*' speech meant he was pleased with what he had done. Others thought that Emilia comes into the room in the passage.

- (b) This was a very popular question. There were some perceptive responses which drew on different interpretations of Iago's views. The most successful candidates could support the points about Iago's disdain and general misogyny with close reference to the text and well-selected, specific textual detail. Most candidates took a plot-based approach on how he uses Desdemona, Emilia and Bianca in his scheming and this generally led to a competent response. It was understood that he has no compunction about leading Othello to kill Desdemona and that he kills his own wife to shut her up. Credit was also given to candidates who used Iago's way of describing Othello's wooing of Desdemona to Brabantio as a further example of his misogyny. Some misconceptions were that Iago wanted to marry Desdemona presumably based on his unconvincing statement that he loves her too.

Many candidates cited Iago's manner of speaking to Emilia, towards whom he shows no affection, speaking to at best with condescension, at worst with a brusque dismissiveness. The best answers demonstrated textual knowledge through quoting Iago's words to illustrate this. These answers focused on all three women, with proportionately less attention to the men whom Iago engages with in the play; weaker response tended to focus on the details of how Iago ensnares Othello featuring Desdemona as a pawn in his game rather than an illustration of Iago's attitude to women. There was much generalisation about the role of women in the 'patriarchal' society.

Weaker candidates gave generalised comments about Iago showing no respect for women, being rude to his wife, and ruining Desdemona's marriage, but with no textual support for the points made. There were many character sketches of Iago with some candidates erroneously commenting that his marriage was wonderful to an adoring wife.

Generally candidates understood his attitudes towards women, but lacked the textual knowledge to give well-supported points. In summarising what was required for high attainment in this question, as indeed with all questions, the first consideration is the need to be relevant. For example, how Iago uses Roderigo says a lot generally about his ruthless cunning, but it is only tangentially relevant to his treatment of women.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/23 Drama 23</p>

Key messages

- Successful answers began by introducing the main thrust of the answer, avoided lengthy historical background or plot summary and maintained focus on three or four main points in direct response to the question.
- Good answers ensured points were developed and supported with detailed reference to the text, often in the form of brief, memorised quotations.
- Strong answers to passage-based questions briefly stated the context of the passage and considered the content of the scene and the effects of the use of language, structure and staging.
- For answers to discursive questions, successful candidates made the best selection of relevant material from the whole text and used it to support a range of three or four directly relevant and developed points.
- Answers were boosted by personal engagement with the text which showed an appreciation of its stagecraft and considered likely audience response.

General comments

Most candidates responded well to their set plays, showing knowledge and understanding of characters' actions and motivations, while the best essays explored the playwright's use of stagecraft and language to achieve specific effects. There were some clearly reasoned and engaged responses. These candidates referred to relevant and detailed textual material in support of their points and addressed the question throughout. Strong answers addressed the terms of the question in a range of three or four salient points and supported them with a careful selection of the most apposite textual material. Candidates less adept at organising their answers often spent too long on relatively minor points and so missed out on the chance to develop points more relevant to the question asked. Candidates at all levels boosted their answers by conveying a lively personal response to the play as it presents on stage.

Successful answers focused on addressing key terms in the question, such as 'vividly', 'memorably', 'powerfully' or 'strikingly', and sustained the link to the question throughout the essay. Some candidates found it helpful to jot down very brief essay plans of a few lines, which noted the three or four points to be made and the most suitable material to use in support of them. The best essays to passage-based questions began by briefly giving the context of the passage to show understanding of its significance within the play, before exploring the passage itself in detail. The best essays to discursive questions began by considering the question and giving three or four key points before developing each one in detail and supporting them with brief, carefully selected and analysed quotations. Some candidates showed a lack of focus on the question by writing long, general introductions, narrating the plot, giving biographical details of the writer, or stating irrelevant social, cultural or historical background to the text. Others seemed to write down everything they knew about a play or character without linking it to the question.

Good answers explored how authors created dramatic effects. They considered how the writer presented characters through their actions and speech and their interactions with others. They explored how the author structured the play to highlight their ideas and entertained the audience by creating tension, humour or intrigue. In strong answers, analysis of the writing of the play explicitly considered its context within a scene and its intended effect on the audience. Other answers sometimes identified a feature of drama, such as foreshadowing or dramatic irony, but did not show understanding of its intended effect. Weaker answers sometimes commented on a feature an audience could not see or hear. An example was punctuation such as an exclamation mark, with the candidate claiming that it made the actor shout. To gain any credit for this, the candidate needed to show understanding of the context – what is the effect of that character shouting that line at that moment? Exclamations are not always intended to be shouted – they convey a character's surprise or emotion and how they are delivered depends on the context.

This session there was a small number of rubric infringements on component 23, in which candidates answered two passage-based or two discursive questions. In these cases, only the higher mark was credited. To avoid confusion, candidates need to number their answers accurately and clearly at the start of their responses.

Centres are reminded that in 2025 the texts *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* will be replaced by *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney and William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) The passage forms the ending to the main part of the play before the epilogue. Candidates who considered this context recognised Ernestine's nearly adult perspective. Most answers were able to pick out aspects of the passage which shed light on the women's relationships.

Strong answers considered how Ernestine always admired Lily for being independent. Lily assures Ernestine she is not a communist, because she has more options for her future which were not open to Lily. They pointed out that Lily calling Ernestine by the shortened 'Ernie' shows the two are close. Lily shows her concern and love for Ernestine by encouraging her to 'find her own 'root' to the truth'. Perceptive answers considered how Lily's work on Ernestine's graduation dress symbolically illustrates how Lily values Ernestine's education because it gives her options for her future. Good answers considered how Ernestine's simple reply 'No?' illustrates how she is now ready to question advice and make reasoned decisions.

Ernestine's fantasy of Lily and Gerte dancing together was often seen as dramatically expressing Ernestine's desire for the two women to be friends. Better answers linked the vision to 'vividly' and gave their personal reaction to its humorous exaggeration. Some answers pointed out the distancing effect of the stage direction placing Lily and Gerte 'facing each other' and saw this as a sign that their relationship remains cold. Perceptive answers considered the subtle overtures of friendship made by Lily offering Gerte a drink, by Gerte touching Lily's shoulder, her attempt to repair their relationship by beginning 'I wish' – perhaps to wish things had been different between them – followed by Lily's embarrassed attempt to fend off Gerte's overture. Developed comments on this interaction considered that even if the two were not close friends, at least they were no longer enemies.

Weaker answers often made general comments based on material from earlier in the play, rather than focusing on the content of the passage, and needed to consider the actions and dialogue of the characters on stage to address 'vividly'.

- (b) There was sympathy expressed for the overwhelming grief Godfrey felt at the death of his wife. Some showed understanding of how Godfrey's belief in Father Devine helped him cope with his grief, with some thoughtful answers claiming that his belief removed some of his responsibility for making decisions. Godfrey's experience of racism in New York was also generally considered as deserving sympathy, with reference to the racist physical attack.

Strong answers addressed 'to what extent' Godfrey deserved sympathy by developing their comments on his grief and religion. Thus, they saw that the extent of Godfrey's grief paralysed him and prevented him from making decisions; and that his unquestioning adherence to the strict rules imposed by Father Devine was selfish because it restricted not only his life but his daughters' too. The unnecessary move to New York and his surprise marriage to Gerte were also seen as being selfish. The shock and ferocity of the physical racist attack was explored sympathetically by a few candidates.

Candidates who had made a very brief plan at the start listing three or four points to include organised their responses well and covered a range of valid points, some including Godfrey's reticence with his daughters, his lack of ambition for Ernestine, and the family's relative poverty. Some candidates spent too long illustrating how Godfrey's grief was portrayed, and so their answer

lacked range. Weak answers offered sympathy with only a little general reference to the text as support.

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

Question 2

- (a) Candidates who first established the context of the passage showed a better understanding of the text and some of its deeper implications. It is time for Elesin to fulfil his role as the King's Horseman and to guide the dead king to the world of his ancestors. It was helpful to consider that much of the drama and mystery of the passage is contained in how Elesin is preparing to die to carry out his role. Strong answers recognised how Elesin is deliberately falling into a trance and explored how the stage directions show this in terms such as 'semi-hypnosis', 'in a kind of daze', 'a little breathless' and 'with a solemn finality'. They explored the mysteriousness of Elesin's detailed description of his journey to an afterlife to meet the king. The best answers explored Elesin's dialogue and actions, commenting on the suspense and drama created by the call and response between Elesin and the Praise-Singer and how Elesin only hears 'faintly' as he begins his journey away from the world of the living. His faltering dance steps show him losing strength. The music and drumming add to the dramatic, mesmerising impact of the scene.

Some candidates explored Elesin's exchanges with the Praise-Singer in detail. They considered how the Praise-Singer is making sure Elesin is fulfilling his duty and explored their enigmatic use of traditional Yoruba sayings. They considered the implications of the Praise-Singer again offering to go with Elesin, or to go in his place if necessary; but that at this moment it seems as though Elesin is succeeding in his role.

Other answers quoted parts of the passage and attempted to comment on them, but without an understanding of their context which limited the answer. Weaker answers attempted to explain the role of the King's Horseman, but did not relate this to the passage, or simply narrated parts of the plot.

- (b) Most candidates understood that Pilkings' role as District Officer is to enforce the law, but that in order to do this he does not consider it necessary to understand and empathise with local culture and customs. Stronger answers supported this with examples, such as Pilkings' wearing of Egungun costumes for entertainment thus defiling their sanctity. They understood the deeper implications of Pilkings' attitude, such as his desire to prevent Elesin's attempt at suicide because he believes it is inciting unrest amongst local Yoruba people, a belief reinforced by the insistent loud drumming heard from Yoruba villages. Fewer candidates made the point that although attempting to commit suicide is against British law, the ritual suicide of the King's Horseman forms part of Yoruba culture. The role of the King's Horseman is to die after the king and go with him to the afterlife, thus ensuring the future equilibrium of the Yoruba world. Perceptive candidates suggested that by preventing Elesin's suicide, Pilkings actually incites unrest in Yoruba society.

Many candidates balanced Pilkings' lack of understanding of Yoruba culture and practices with Elesin's own reluctance to fulfil his role, shown in his love of life in the market place, his delaying tactics in marrying the girl, in Iyalaja's angry and bitter accusations of Elesin in the police cell, and in Elesin's own sense of responsibility, shame and suicide at the end. Some explored the tragedy of Olunde's sacrifice of his life in an honourable attempt to fulfil his father's duty in his place.

Responsibility for the failure of Elesin's ritual suicide was divided between Pilkings and Elesin. Weaker candidates struggled to support their arguments with apt textual reference, and the weakest lost focus on the question and narrated Elesin's actions in the market-place, or Pilkings' actions at the ball.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) Candidates who placed the passage in context knew that it occurs the morning after the poker party when Stanley got drunk and hit Stella, and understood that it is because of this that Blanche wants Stella to leave Stanley. Most candidates commented on Blanche's memorable sense of her own social superiority and how she denigrates Stanley by comparing his actions graphically to those of animals. They usually supported comments with apt textual support, such as 'apes ...

grunting... and swilling and gnawing and hulking!’ Stronger answers explored the effects of such exaggerated and graphic language in cementing the audience’s opinions of Stanley as someone who instinctively acts on his desires rather than exercising restraint and reasoning.

Stella’s cold response to Blanche in her invitation to her to ‘...say it all’ was clearly seen by some as indicating her disagreement with Blanche’s opinion of Stanley. Some also pointed out that her disagreement with Blanche is memorably shown by the physicality of her welcome as she embraces Stanley ‘fiercely’.

Some weaker answers spent too long on Blanche’s dialogue rather than moving on to analyse the dramatic staging effects of Stanley hiding as he listens to Blanche viciously insult him. Stronger answers commented on the dramatic irony and how it creates tension for the audience as they wait for Stanley’s reaction. Others made insightful comments comparing Stanley to a predator ominously waiting to ambush his prey. Perceptive answers considered that the way Stanley refrains from interrupting shows his intelligence and ability to exercise restraint, contrary to Blanche’s opinion of him, and how his knowledge of Blanche’s opinion of him gives him power. The stage direction describing his animalistic gesture of ‘licking his lips’ shows how he relishes hearing Blanche’s views, which makes him feel justified in hurting her later in the play. How he ‘grins’ at Blanche indicates his feeling of victory over her as Stella chooses him over her sister, which is significant because at the end of the play, she also chooses to believe Stanley rather than Blanche.

Most candidates made relevant comments on Blanche’s memorable comparison of Stanley to animals, with some comment on the effect of Stanley hiding as he listens. Weaker answers needed to explore the writing and staging in more detail.

- (b) Candidates who took a moment to think about how best to approach this question and to select the most relevant supporting material to include, organised their responses well and covered a range of valid points. Some candidates made a brief plan of these points. Good answers commonly considered how Stanley hits Stella during the poker night because she threatens his authority by playing music, how he tells Mitch about Blanche’s promiscuous past to sour their relationship, and his rape of Blanche perhaps to get rid of her, to punish her for her lies, from revenge for her views of him – or just because he can. Stronger answers explored the motivations for his cruelty and the effect of his actions on others; some perceptively traced an escalation of intensity and seriousness in his actions in the play.

Most candidates explored Stanley’s character to explain his cruelty. They considered how he sees himself as the dominant male in the household, and if this position is threatened, he uses violence to secure it. Stronger answers also considered his psychological cruelty towards Blanche. He toys with her, such as pretending to give her a birthday gift, when he has cruelly bought her a one-way ticket back to Laurel, when he knows she is unwelcome there and unable to return. He destroys her fantasies and exposes her past to Mitch to ruin her chances of marriage. He physically asserts his dominance over her with the rape, with no thought for her physical or mental well-being; and cruelly shows no compassion for her breakdown afterwards, even lying to his wife about it.

The best answers maintained focus on Stanley’s cruelty, citing the strongest examples. Others wrote generally about Stanley’s character, spending too long on aspects such as his machismo, the physicality of his love for Stella, his anger at Blanche’s loss of Belle Reve, or his bonding with male friends in poker and bowling. Weaker answers narrated parts of the play which feature Stanley and asserted he was cruel.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Question 4

- (a) Candidates often expressed their enjoyment of this play in lively personal responses. The best answers began by placing the passage in context; the mechanicals are in the wood rehearsing their play, when Puck happens upon them; nearby, he has just administered the love potion to a sleeping Titania. Bottom’s singing at the end of this passage wakes Titania who promptly falls in love with him.

Most candidates commented well on the entertainment provided by the mechanicals, whose enthusiastic but inexperienced acting is humorous for the audience. Examples given included actors forgetting their cues, misinterpreting their lines and creating absurdities such as men playing

'Wall'. Stronger answers noted the sincerity of the mechanicals' misguided efforts. Perceptive answers considered how Puck is almost part of the audience, since he stays to watch, and he mirrors the audience response. Good answers responded to staging effects, pointing out that Puck is invisible to the mechanicals, which enables him to mock them and create confusion without discovery; some explored the contrasting lyricism of Puck's rhyming speech as he uses magic to swiftly change his appearance, with the ensuing chaos mirrored in the quick succession of images and sounds he uses.

Some weaker answers did not understand Puck's actions. Some candidates did not comment beyond the rehearsals, and so limited their answers. Others responded well to Puck's mischief in switching Bottom's own head for that of an ass, often pointing out how apt this is, since Bottom is as foolish as asses are supposed to be. Some weaker answers showed confusion: some thought all of Bottom was now an ass, not just his head, and some thought that in the place of his head he now had a donkey's bottom. Some weaker answers agreed with Bottom and thought that the mechanicals were playing a trick on him. Better answers explored the dialogue more accurately and noted the mechanicals' shock and how their fear makes them run off. Stronger answers explored stagecraft and dramatic irony; the audience know that Puck has created the chaos on stage, but the mechanicals do not, and so their extreme reactions are funny. Some candidates commented on the irony of Bottom's comments on 'ass-head' and how he is being made 'an ass', while being unaware of his literal ass-head; and there were perceptive comments on how the banal singing of Bottom reflects his foolish character and compares unfavourably with Puck's exciting rhyming earlier.

The best answers engaged with the context and humour of the passage and explored writing and staging effects. Most answers addressed the mechanicals' attempts at a play rehearsal. Weaker answers knew some of the plot but needed to use detailed textual reference and to show understanding of staging.

- (b) Most candidates recognised that Helena feels she has been treated unfairly. Strong answers selected support from three main areas of the text: early in the play when Helena compares herself unfavourably to Hermia and asks her how she attracts Demetrius so that she can do the same; when Helena follows Demetrius into the wood and begs him to love her, and lastly when the love potion makes both Lysander and Demetrius declare their love for Helena, making her think that the men and Hermia are all playing a trick on her to mock her and she openly accuses her friends of treating her unfairly.

Candidates who made a brief plan which included their main points and the most suitable supporting material, often had well organised answers covering a range of points. Others often used a narrow focus on the text which limited their answers. Those who used apt supporting text wrote stronger answers. The most convincing textual support was in the form of short quotations.

The best answers analysed the effects of some of the language in conveying Helena's hurt feelings. They often discussed how Helena is so desperate for attention from Demetrius that she debases herself to him when she begs him to 'Use me but as your spaniel', begging him to hit her rather than ignore her. There were personal responses which suggested Demetrius does not deserve her love. They reminded us that at the end, Demetrius remains under the love spell, so it is not clear how far his love for Helena is real. Some astute candidates judged that all that mattered for the happy ending to the play was that Helena was content.

Perceptive answers developed their points. Some explored how dramatic irony leads the audience to laugh at Helena's situation, despite her injured feelings; they know about the love potion, and so find humour in the lovers' quarrel. The enchanted men use comically overblown language such as 'O Helen, goddess', and the erstwhile friends, Helena and Hermia, argue with comic intensity which includes threats of violence and name-calling, such as 'you counterfeit, you puppet'. Weaker answers did not include textual detail, or narrated events without analysis or reference to the question; some candidates confused the characters.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) Most answers recognised how Iago portrays himself to Othello as being loyal. Good answers quoted textual support to show Iago's technique, such as how he obsequiously begs Othello's

pardon 'For too much loving' him. Strong answers explored the effect of this; it convinces Othello that Iago has Othello's best interests at heart because of his love for him. This in turn leads Othello to trust Iago and focus on what he says instead of his motives in saying it. This allows Iago to cast doubt on Desdemona's honour without incurring suspicion himself. One candidate aptly described Iago's technique as 'sycophantic villainy'.

Most candidates realised that Iago is not actually loyal to Othello. Better answers supported this by stating Iago's motive of revenge (for being passed over for promotion) and the context of the passage. Iago has set up this moment by advising Cassio to ask Desdemona to plead with Othello for his reinstatement. After Iago has raised suspicions of Cassio and Desdemona's relationship, any preference Desdemona expresses for Cassio can only reinforce Othello's suspicions.

Strong answers explored how Iago is portrayed through his dialogue. They commented how he does not lie here by inventing 'proof' of Desdemona's supposed infidelity, which could be refuted. He is subtle and only hints at possible transgressions. The effect of this is to make Othello picture the worst, because he thinks that Iago 'doubtless Sees and knows more...than he unfolds'. Other good answers explored how Iago plays on Othello's weaknesses to provide apparent justification for Desdemona's infidelity. He refers to Othello being an outsider and unaware of how Venetian wives habitually deceive their husbands, he points out that Desdemona deceived her father by marrying, so may also deceive Othello and he hints that Desdemona's love for Othello is 'unnatural' due to their different race. Perceptive answers suggested that all these reasons lessen Othello's trust in Desdemona, until by the end of the passage he is convinced that she is false.

The best answers explored the subtlety of Iago's manipulation of Othello and analysed the dialogue. Some perceptive answers considered the effect of dramatic irony in creating tension, since the audience know Iago is deceiving Othello and that Desdemona is true and so they fear for the outcome. Weaker answers were unsure of Desdemona's honesty; some believed she and Cassio were lovers, and some took Iago's declarations of love and honesty at face value. Others needed to explore the writing of the passage in detail.

- (b)** Most candidates understood that Roderigo is a victim of Iago, who uses him to achieve revenge against Othello for not promoting him. Most understood how Iago claims to be propositioning Desdemona on Roderigo's behalf while cheating him out of money and jewels by pretending to give them to her as tokens of Roderigo's love. Stronger answers showed how Roderigo tries to hold Iago accountable for his failure with Desdemona, but Iago easily quietens his complaints and continues to take advantage of the naïve young nobleman. Thoughtful candidates weighed up how far Roderigo's own character flaws contribute to his falling victim to Iago; Roderigo can not be very intelligent to think that Desdemona's virtue can be bought with expensive gifts, and his morals are questionable to want to try to corrupt Desdemona. Brabantio had not thought him worthy enough to be a suitor for Desdemona, while Iago dismisses him as 'poor trash of Venice'.

Good answers considered other examples of Roderigo being Iago's victim, such as the opening to the play, when Iago uses Roderigo to inform Brabantio of Desdemona's elopement with Othello, while remaining unidentified himself. Iago continues to use Roderigo to further his plans for revenge; Iago persuades Roderigo to start a fight with Cassio, on the grounds that Cassio is a rival for Desdemona's love. Rightly, Roderigo is wary of fighting Cassio, who is a brave and able soldier; but again, Iago is able to convince Roderigo to do what he wants.

Strong answers considered the tragedy of Roderigo's death, when he has become a liability to Iago by finally realising how he has been fooled. He falls victim to Iago's ruthlessness and is tragically killed by him. A few candidates commented on the way the truth about Iago's treachery is confirmed in letters found in Roderigo's pockets, but sadly too late to help Roderigo or to prevent Othello's murderous actions.

The best answers sustained a focus on how Roderigo was duped into following all of Iago's instructions. Some blamed Roderigo's weak morality and intelligence for how easily he was tricked, while others pointed out that Roderigo is not the only character to be cleverly manipulated by Iago. Brief essay plans often helped candidates to cover a range of pertinent points and to use apt textual support, often in the form of short quotation. Weaker answers struggled to remember the part played by Roderigo in any detail; the weakest confused Roderigo with Cassio and so made few relevant points.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/31 Drama (Open Text) 31</p>

Key messages

- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph, sustained the link, 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.
- In passage-based questions, successful answers briefly stated the context of the passage, selecting relevant material from the whole passage, and analysed both content and the use of language, structure and staging.
- Successful answers to the discursive questions maintained focus on the question and could refer to specific incidents from across the whole text, making relevant and developed points.
- 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

There were some well-developed answers with a perceptive grasp of authorial choices and a critical understanding of the plays' concerns. Most candidates showed a good recall of the plots, enjoyment of their set texts and evident engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they feature.

The main issues in less successful answers on these texts were: a narrative or descriptive approach saying what happens (usually accurately) but without comment and analysis; lengthy focus on small details, for example exclamation marks or individual words, at the expense of range, and lengthy explanation of social context which often distracted from the task or was applied in a superficial way. There was considerable 'ploughing through' the passages line by line rather than judicious selection of the most significant elements to answer the question.

The most popular text was *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* followed by *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Othello* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. *Death and the King's Horseman* was the least popular text. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, and were aware of the text as performance, showing an appreciation of stagecraft, mood and tone, and considering likely audience response.

With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. It was pleasing to see that introductions were shorter, but some candidates still included lengthy plot summaries before engaging with the question and moving onto directly relevant material. Others listed literary features to be covered in their essay, such as repetition or rhetorical questions, which also constituted an unproductive way to start a response. In discursive essays it is more helpful for candidates to write a sentence or two, referencing the question, and giving a brief overview of the key points before moving swiftly on to develop them in the main body of the essay. In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage, is a more helpful way to start an answer.

The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the given extract, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points were missed. 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. Brief essay plans often helped candidates to cover a range of pertinent points and to select apt textual support. Less successful answers had a shortage

of specific textual detail to support points which left little scope for analysis and resulted in a basic retelling of the plot. Narrative or descriptive approaches gain limited reward.

In both passage and discursive essays selected details were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range. Candidates less adept at organising their answers often spent too long on relatively minor points and so missed out on the chance to develop more relevant points. The most successful responses struck a balance between developing their analytical points, ranging across the text to give coverage, and relating their points to the authors' ideas and themes.

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 the dramatic impact created. Even when candidates have not seen a performance of the play, it is important to consider the impact of characters' appearance and interaction on stage or offer their own personal response. Candidates should remind themselves that, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation and alliteration in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created, is unproductive. Some weaker responses gave undue focus to stage directions, out of context of the accompanying dialogue, when it is the combination of the two which conveys meaning and creates effects.

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.

There were many brief responses and several rubric infringements where candidates answered two passage-based questions rather than one on each text. In this case, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded.

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. They should also be aware that using the passage to answer the discursive question is unlikely to contain much to reward.

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.

Centres are reminded that in 2025 the texts *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* will be replaced by *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney and William Shakespeare's, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) This was the most popular question on the paper, with few choosing the discursive option for this text. Most candidates found it accessible and made relevant comments about the girls' shock at the arrival of Godfrey with Gerte and recognised the significance of racial segregation in America and the post-war historical context. Stronger responses demonstrated knowledge of the context of Godfrey's absence from the house, the allusion to bringing '*order to things*' following his earlier conflict with Lily, and the surprising nature of this union given Godfrey's grief and attitudes to racial mixing. They considered Godfrey's and Gerte's contribution to the scene, the abrupt introduction, awkward gestures and signs of nervousness. The strongest answers discussed staging, as well as linguistic effects, the girls' angry outbursts contrasting with Godfrey's calm demeanour and Gerte's hearty laughter, the formality of Gerte's '*practised*' speech, Ermina's leg-twitching, the breaking of the fourth wall and Ernestine's unusual directness. Some saw the significance of Ernestine's reference to Gerte '*laughing in our doorway*', invading the family space, although the cinematic allusions were rarely considered. Some strong responses considered Lily's reaction to the news in the context of the earlier scene signifying her own desire for a relationship with Godfrey. Very few mentioned the dramatic blackout at the end as contributing to the shock and leaving the audience

on edge, anticipating further conflict. It was interesting how few responses referred to the audience experience, and that, despite having greater knowledge than the characters regarding the origin of this relationship, we too are shocked by this revelation. Others considered how pathos was elicited for Gerte being the victim of racism, in context of a play where this is a key theme, and also the role of humour, Gerte's laughter and Ermina's sarcasm, in alleviating tension. The strongest connected the moment to the broader themes of loss, identity, and familial disruption in the play.

Less successful responses did not go beyond simple expression of the girls' hostility to Gerte and restricted their answers to the shocked reaction to Gerte's ethnicity and the family's recent bereavement. Such responses tended to narrate or paraphrase the passage and showed little understanding of the characters, or the dynamics between them, beyond what was revealed in this extract, focusing on surface-level reactions without delving into the subtext. There was some attention to the language of the text, for example the abruptness of '*she white*', but often literary features were mentioned without development, for example Ernestine talking to the audience, but without explaining its effect, or quoting that Godfrey speaks '*defensively*' and the girls are '*dumbfounded*' but without comment.

- (b) Most candidates had a definite appreciation of Lily as a lively and unconventional character and they cited her clothes, her determination to enjoy herself by drinking and dancing, and how her values contrasted with Godfrey's. The more successful responses understood how this bold and outspoken character helps create tension and dramatic moments, recognising her role in the narrative and her importance as a counterpoint to the insulated and traditional Godfrey, extolling activism rather than prayer in the face of injustice. Many recognised that her flirtatious and free-spirited personality challenges societal norms of the time and that she encourages both girls to broaden their horizons, though few explored at any length her interest in politics and her world view. Ernestine's essay on communism, and the tension it creates in the family, featured in several responses.

In the best responses, candidates could substantiate such points with detailed reference and could evidence how the character contributes to the key ideas the play is exploring, and to the audience's dramatic experience. The most perceptive responses noted Lily's vulnerability beneath her confident exterior, identifying a further layer of complexity and that the audience's perception of her character may evolve throughout the play. They referenced Lily's financial instability, her questionable grand claims and the poignancy of her end, delivered in The Epilogue. The most successful answers used specific textual detail and a range of reference from across the text to illustrate how she commands strong feelings and different reactions within the narrative.

Weaker responses described her character, her unexpected arrival in the family and gave a general account of the different perspective she offers, but many found it difficult to articulate why this made her '*dramatically compelling*'. Precise detail, reference to specific moments and how Lily is characterised through her actions and speech, was lacking in many answers which resulted in general character sketches with little discussion of methods used by Nottage for dramatic impact. Some responses framed their ideas solely around contrasting the character of Lily with that of Godfrey, which offered salient material but often led to a limited range of points and overlooked her interactions with Ernestine and Ermina. Lily's direct and colourful language was often mentioned or quoted, for example '*Her way of speaking tells a lot about her*' but not related to the question or developed.

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

Question 2

- (a) This was the more popular of the two questions on this text. Most candidates were able to identify Simon Pilkings' dismissive attitude to other cultures and, indeed, to religion in general, and some discussed the significance of his dismissive reference to the '*costume*', and '*the man*' as referring to Elesin's arrest. They noted how Pilkings prioritises the ball above the imprisonment of Elesin and undervalues his responsibility for this grave issue citing it as '*nothing to worry about*'.

The strongest answers evidenced the contrast between Simon's high anxiety and excitement about the Prince's visit with his reduced concern for Elesin's potential suicide. They identified the theatrical contrast between the Pilkings' lighthearted conversation and the gravity of the play's themes, recognising the cultural insensitivity in their banter, which deepens the dramatic tension. They explored the flippant and casual arrogance in Pilkings' interactions, which reflect his colonial

mindset and his dismissive attitude toward indigenous culture. Stage directions from the end of the extract were fruitfully used to evidence the light mood. The strongest also explored the implications of this behaviour and the political ramifications of his actions in the wider play, using the extract as a springboard to discuss Soyinka's broader themes of colonialism, cultural clashes and abuse of power. Some higher level responses identified and explored the discernible differences between the attitudes of Simon and Jane Pilkings, giving a nuanced response to Jane's playful yet sharp dialogue, showcasing her support for Pilkings while subtly challenging him.

In the weakest responses, however, there was an insecure understanding of what was happening in the extract and misunderstandings regarding Joseph, the reason why an apology from Simon was warranted, and the identities of both Amusa and the Prince. Many struggled to engage with '*striking impressions*' and offered a character sketch of Simon or discussed the Pilkings as a unit without differentiating between them. Few offered a personal response or considered audiences' potential reaction to the attitudes represented. A few responses featured a lengthy discussion of colonialism which was relevant to this question but was often not closely anchored to the extract and to the officious and flippant comments from Simon.

- (b) Too few responses seen to comment.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) This was a very popular question on the paper and it was accessible, to some extent at least, to all candidates who were able to appreciate the key term '*dramatic*' in their responses. Common areas for discussion included Mitch's rejection and Blanche's state of mind. Most candidates identified the significance of the polka music in the wider play and the haunting nature of the Mexican Woman's chant, whilst more developed responses were able to explore the contribution of these elements, and the '*blue*' piano, in some detail, offering valid interpretations regarding the '*death*' of the relationship and Blanche's hopes, and foreshadowing her future demise. The most successful responses sensitively explored the substance of Blanche's monologue and frank confession, Blanche effectively '*coming clean*' about her past, illuminating the central themes of death, desire and the role of trauma. They recognised how Williams evokes pathos for the character both here and in the final moment of '*dropping to her knees*', having been brought low.

The highest achieving candidates were able to focus clearly and critically on the two characters while drawing out key points about language and stagecraft and linking their points to the wider play's concerns, for example the historical and social context of gender expectations shaping characters' actions. They explored Mitch's devastating rejection and moral judgement of Blanche as '*unclean*' which marks a pivotal shift in Blanche's instability, and traced her growing hysteria and how it heightens the emotional intensity of the scene. The more astute noted Mitch's ungallant behaviour, no longer the '*gentleman*' of earlier scenes, finding his intentions as he '*follows her purposefully*' both dramatic and disturbing.

Most candidates revealed a good understanding of the relationship between Mitch and Blanche and recognised the context of Stanley's intervention, but weaker responses were less strong on Blanche's past, the implications of this moment in the wider play and the events at the close of the scene. Most showed understanding of Mitch's rejection, citing Blanche's lies and were able to make something of the fact that she was very disturbed by past events, but weaker responses tended to give a largely narrative account of events. The repetition of '*lies*', '*flares*' and '*fire*' commonly featured in more basic responses as illustrating Williams' language choices which help create drama, but there was less engagement with material in Blanche's monologue and there was some confusion over references to the '*old woman*' in a number of answers. Blanche's state of mind was discussed in most responses, although the interpretations ranged widely with regard to sympathy afforded to the character. Weaker responses claimed Blanche was '*drunk and rambling*', '*talking nonsense*' and acting '*crazily*', giving a superficial reading.

- (b) There were some clearly reasoned and engaged responses to this question. Most candidates were able to identify how Blanche viewed herself as superior to many aspects of her life in New Orleans, including her surroundings, the people she associates with and even her sister. There was much discussion of Blanche's privileged past in the Old South at Belle Reve, the wealth and privilege her family had lost and her past shaping her into believing herself superior. Many mentioned her

disdain for her sister's home, her clothes, and her cultured literary references which contrast with her new surroundings.

Stronger responses could cite specific moments when this sense of superiority is shown, for example Blanche claiming her French ancestry with Mitch or speaking French despite knowing he cannot understand, her letter to Shep Huntleigh and her singling out Mitch as '*superior*' to the other poker players. Many referenced her disdain for the apartment, '*this horrible place*' in Elysian Fields in the opening scene. Several responses analysed her condescension toward Stanley and Stella, asserting that this reflects her belief in her social and moral superiority. They quoted Blanche's insulting language about Stanley being '*bestial*' and '*apelike*' although few noted how the audience are strikingly made aware that Stanley overhears this, creating dramatic tension. Several also recognised the irony of Blanche urging Stella to escape, and indeed her delusions of superiority, given her own straitened circumstances and reliance on Stanley's charity.

Stronger responses addressed the '*sense*' of her own superiority effectively by exploring how this may be a defence mechanism against her insecurities, her fragile ego, or an act to hide her lack of self-worth. Blanche frankly insists she is not '*being or feeling at all superior*' but is '*ashamed to be*' in her current position, having ridden on the streetcar named Desire. The more astute recognised how her insistence on avoiding strong light and her need to bathe reveal her true insecurity rather than superiority, and the importance she attaches to appearing cultured and pristine suggests she conflates physical and social appearance with human worth. Some of the more successful responses saw the symbolism of Blanche's attachment to Belle Reve as a representation of a lost way of life, situating the play in its social and historical context and the fall of the South. They also discussed how the audience's perception of Blanche evolves as her flaws are revealed and her '*sense of superiority*' is dramatically challenged.

Most candidates could reference Blanche's disdain for Stanley and some of the insults used to belittle him, although this sometimes produced a narrow response, focusing solely on contrasting her with Stanley, but neglecting the interactions with other characters such as Stella and Mitch. Some weaker responses were largely character sketches with little focus on the '*strikingly conveyed*' part of the question and lacking precise details from the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Question 4

- (a) The vast majority of candidates were able to engage with the entertaining confusion caused by Oberon's potion and they could explain how the behaviour of the male characters completely bewilders both Helena and Hermia. The stronger responses explored how the dramatic irony supported the humour of the scene and that the fierce competition to prove themselves escalates the conflict between Lysander and Demetrius and adds to the chaos. There was more focus upon, and a more sensitive consideration of, the emotions of the women. The reversal of roles was explored and stronger candidates considered both the pathos and humour created by this scene. Some explored Hermia's heartbreak and disbelief at Lysander's rejection, reflecting her vulnerability. The overblown declarations of love were identified and contrasted with Demetrius' earlier scorn for Helena, whilst others considered the juxtaposition of Hermia's 'sweet love' endearments with Lysander's hateful insults. Candidates noted Helena's ironic tone, believing she is the subject of '*sport*', and considered the possible pathos of Helena's lack of confidence in her ability to inspire love and her abject claim that '*death or absence*' would remedy her situation. One interesting response noted the irony of Lysander's reference to Hermia as '*hated potion*' and his refusal to '*hurt her*' as Shakespeare conveying that Lysander's subconscious clings onto his true feelings for his love and senses the source of the turmoil. The strongest recognised the rapid shifts in tone creating dramatic tension or explored the symbolism of the wood and how this contrasted with the order of Athens. Some considered how the scene conveys how sisterhood is ruptured, and related the scene to the play's broader concerns, the irrationality of love and that the '*course of true love never did run smooth*'.

A number of candidates related the whole backstory of the love potion or narrated the scene, offering accurate interpretations of the emotions of the characters, for example, anger, confusion and betrayal, but with much less appreciation of how these are '*dramatically portrayed*'. Textual reference was often sparse in the weaker responses with limited focus on language choices or how the humorous effects are achieved. When there was some appreciation of how these emotions were dramatically portrayed, the questions of Hermia and the angry exclamations of Lysander were

popular choices. Several candidates interpreted Lysander's demand '*Hang off, thou cat*' as directed to Demetrius rather than Hermia, and very few considered the language of the insults levelled at Hermia in these lines.

- (b) All candidates were able to produce a relevant and personal response to this question. Most responses talked about how the mechanicals had been tasked with performing a play at Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding and their preparations to do so. Some recognised the earnestness of the humble labourers and the humour gained from their unquestioning acceptance of the ridiculous choices made in staging the play within a play. They recognised that their seriousness adds a layer of charm to their comedic antics and may prompt pity or affection from the audience due to their simplicity.

The best responses discussed how the mechanicals broadened the canvas of the play by contrasting them with the wealthy nobles and gave a down-to-earth perspective amidst the magical and noble characters, their problems being minor. They considered the actual performance, the broad comedy of the characters acting the part of props and destroying the illusion for fear of frightening the ladies. Very few included Bottom/Pyramus's prolonged death scene or his mispronunciations and over-reliance on alliteration. Some appreciated the poor choice of play for a wedding and the significance of '*lamentable comedy*' whilst others mentioned Bottom's malapropisms but often lacked support to demonstrate their use. Some responses included the dialogue of the wedding guests, recognising the irony of their mockery, given their own earlier foolish behaviour. The most successful answers had precise textual support and related the mechanicals' efforts to broader themes of performance and illusion. Some considered how Shakespeare self-referentially satirises his own profession and how the mechanicals' play mirrors the main narrative of forbidden love, where tragic potential is overturned and metamorphoses into comedy. None considered Theseus' view of the characters and that he positions the audience to recognise their value, despite their shortcomings.

Weaker responses were able to show understanding of the characters as a source of broad comedy with some textual support but many gave little response to language and struggled to produce a detailed answer. Most restricted their material to the casting scene and commented on Bottom's domination, and that his enthusiastic desire to play all parts was ludicrous, whilst responses which looked at the actual performance, and indeed Bottom's other scenes, had greater range and higher reward.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) This was a popular question and the vast majority made relevant points regarding the moment Othello is propelled to murder his wife, foreshadowing the tragic culmination of events. Candidates who were more successful on this question understood the dramatic irony of the audience's awareness of Iago's plan, our distress at witnessing Iago's devious and assured manipulation of Othello and our fear for the innocent and '*true*' Desdemona. Most candidates effectively referenced Othello's speeches in the extract, many exploring the brutal connotations of the language or offering valid analyses of '*heart of stone*', the '*contaminated*' bed and the effect of repetition. The stronger responses evidenced Iago's tactics in directing Othello to '*see*' events through a particular lens, stoking Othello's jealousy and anger and intensifying the audience's sense of frustration. Some noted Iago's geniality towards Cassio instantly switching to accusations about his '*vice*', his emboldened insults about Desdemona and his imperative call for how she should be murdered. Several offered an interpretation that Iago backtracks in order to appear innocent in '*you must forget that*' and '*nay that's not your way*', when he is actually persuading Othello to put aside any remaining affection for Desdemona, steering him away from viewing her as a '*fine woman*' and steering him to commit to murder.

The most convincing responses recognised the distressing agony of Othello's conflicting emotions, torn between lingering affection for Desdemona and his belief in her betrayal, reconciling himself to this new view of her, evidenced by the contrasting triplet of '*fine*', '*fair*' and '*sweet*' with '*rot and perish and be damned*'. Others recognised that Othello's exclamation '*cuckold me!*', and his violent hyperbole in wishing to spend '*nine years a killing*' his '*officer*' are generated by damaged honour and ego which may create greater distress and pathos for the innocent characters caught up in the tragedy. Some reflected on how Othello's character and nobility have diminished since the first act,

discussing his descent from calm dignity to irrational rage and a warped view of *'justice'*, vividly seen in his graphic imagery of revenge and murder.

Weaker responses narrated events, describing at length the circumstances whereby Othello witnesses Cassio making light of *'his vice'* and Bianca holding the handkerchief. They claimed that the scene was distressing but without addressing how. Most understood the symbolic value of the handkerchief, although again there was sometimes excessive narrative regarding its journey into Bianca's hands and Iago's past manipulation leading up to this point.

- (b) Common areas of focus for this question included the deaths of Desdemona, Emilia, and Othello, of Iago being exposed as a villain and the truth being made clear to the tragic hero.

The stronger answers explored in detail the distress of Desdemona's death and her poignant, unwavering love for Othello juxtaposed by his own brutal dismissal of her as *'a liar gone to burning hell'*. More developed responses explored the emotional impact of Othello's realisation of Iago's deceit, his own tragic flaws and the remorse which leads to his suicide. Only a few proposed that his act provides some sense of redemption and there was very little focus on the language and imagery of Othello's final speech which underscores his tragic stature. Few referenced Iago's survival, his chilling silence and refusal to provide a motive for his actions and that this may be seen as both powerful and surprising, diminishing the sense of narrative resolution. However, Emilia's exposure of the truth and her fatal defiance of her husband featured in many answers and there was a strong personal response to this 'surprise' event, given her subjugation and secondary role in the wider play. A few responses drew attention to Roderigo's end and highlighted that his murder, along with those of Desdemona, Emilia and Othello, is as a result of misplaced trust, a central theme of the play. None discussed the role of Lodovico, Montano and Gratiano as moral commentators, reflecting on the destruction caused by Iago's schemes or providing resolution. A few strong responses connected the play's ending to the wider context of Shakespearean tragedy and established that the themes of loyalty and betrayal converge in unexpected ways in the ending.

In general there was a reliance on recalling the final events but with limited close reference to the language and the dramatic effects achieved. Many candidates appeared somewhat unclear as to where to focus their answers, opting to range across a broad section of the play rather than on the final scenes and some attempting to use the extract from **5(a)**. Weaker responses commented on the violent nature of the ending and the death toll but with limited exploration of how this is made powerful in the light of the play's concerns. Candidates should be advised to link back to the question after describing or discussing an event or detail, and consider what reactions it may produce in the audience or why it is important in conveying the playwright's ideas.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/32 Drama (Open Text) 32</p>

Key messages

- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph, sustained the link, 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, is an unproductive way to start an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- In passage-based question, successful answers briefly stated the context of the passage, selecting relevant material from the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful answers to the discursive questions, maintained focus on the question and could refer to specific incidents from across the whole text.
- 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

There were some outstanding answers with a sophisticated sense of audience and a detailed exploration of effects. The majority of candidates had a sound grasp of the plots and an engagement with the characters.

The main issues in less successful answers on these texts were: the desire to spot a theme in every paragraph of the answer where this had little to do with the question; including lengthy context or background material distracting from the task, especially in the passage-based questions; a narrative or descriptive approach saying what happens (usually accurately) but without comment and analysis; applying modern idea of feminism or 'the patriarchy' to the texts written in the 16th or 17th centuries. This was sometimes done to great effect but often distracted from the task or was applied in a superficial way. There was considerable 'ploughing through' the passages line by line rather selecting judiciously the most significant elements to answer the question.

The most popular text was *Othello* followed by *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *A Midsummer's Night Dream* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. *Death and the King's Horseman* was the least popular text. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, and were aware of the text as performance, commenting on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved.

Candidates are reminded that with 45 minutes to write an essay there is no requirement for them to write a thesis statement or to retell the plot before answering the specific question. Some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, or plot summaries, before referring to the question, resulting in a loss of focus on the actual terms of the chosen question. In passage-based questions there were many linear approaches which worked through the passage, explaining what was happening, often failing to reach the end so key points were missed. To avoid this, it is 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. 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. These responses looked at the text from an audience perspective and commented on author's 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 in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created, seems unproductive.

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 progress 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. They should also be aware that using the passage to answer the discursive question is unlikely to contain much to reward.

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.

Centres are reminded that in 2025 the texts *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* will be replaced by *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney and William Shakespeare's, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) There were some effective responses here from candidates who appreciated how Lily's arrival shook things up in the Crump household. The best answers focused on the humour, contrasting Lily's approach to life with Godfrey's, and her effect both on him and on the girls, and the entertainment factor in Lily's forthright, bold approach. The girls' responses were considered along with wider issues such as oppression and racism, generally dealt with humorously in this passage. There were some clear evaluations of what made the passage funny.

Much was made of the embarrassment caused by Lily's teasing of Godfrey and her over-familiarity with Ernestine, and some of the most successful answers picked out and analysed the clues both to Lily not being exactly what she claims to be, and to her past history with Godfrey and how Nottage used Lily's dialogue to indicate how Godfrey had changed.

Candidates were less successful where they focused on reference to race when Lily talks about it as they found it hard to link it to the focus of the question. One problem with a significant number of responses lay in the lack of focus on what makes this moment 'entertaining'. Stage directions are also a source of entertainment - for example Ermina's reactions - though these were largely unexplored. Some candidates painted it as a scene of joyful family reunion with no understanding of the tensions or the subtext and how this made it entertaining for the audience with the hints of trouble ahead.

- (b) The most successful answers used specific textual detail and a range of reference from across the text. Most understood the contrast in their characters and aspirations. However, there was often very little on the 'dramatically' of the question and sometimes nothing on the contrast, most often responses produced two character profiles of the girls.

Successful answers commented on Ermina's feisty, social aspects as opposed to Ernestine's quieter and more studious personality. Differences in their responses to their father and Gerte were also cited. Many candidates explored the physical differences between Ernestine and Ermina and commented on their different outcomes at the end of the play. The best answers explored Ernestine's relationship with the audience and how she provides a commentary on events in the play while also noticing that Ermina initially seemed more outspoken. Better answers commented on the way in which Ernestine would address the audience and provide a commentary on events in the play.

Weaker answers misread 'compare' for 'contrast' and focused, for example, on the fact they were both coping with losing their mother, and with the day-to-day racism they were exposed to. A few answers were self-penalising as they focused solely on the passage for 1(a) so rarely made more than a few straightforward comments on the girls.

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

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates understood the market women's adulation and fear of Elesin, with the strongest noting the irony of this in relation to his ultimate failure. Many failed, however, to recognise that his taking offence was a joke and part of his self-interested manipulation contributing to what we learn about his character here.

More successful answers showed understanding of his role and that his behaviour could stop him achieving it and that the Praise Singer and Iyalaja were warning him of this. They looked at stage effects such as the choric chanting, the repetition, the dancing but, in general, the striking dramatic effects of the scene could have been more fully explored.

Some responses failed to see how Elesin teases the women here, and is happy to increase their anxiety levels to feed his ego and his hedonistic impulses, but they did understand their genuine fear of offending him. Weaker responses, while appreciating that the women are unhappy because Elesin is unhappy, failed to explain what he is unhappy about.

- (b) This question achieved a range of responses. The most successful answers explored the personalities of the two men, particularly their flaws, as well as giving an account of what their duties were, as they saw them, and the extent to which they responded to their importance. The question also provided every opportunity to talk about tradition, religion and culture in the colonial context, though the danger here was in contrasting the two world views without maintaining the focus on the two men and what they say and do.

Better answers pointed out some of the ironies in the situation: Pilkings being responsible for two deaths in trying to prevent one, and Olunde fulfilling the traditional role even after having absorbed Western culture.

There was good understanding of the conflicts involved and of the inevitability of failure for at least one of the two characters. There was less success in looking at how the importance was dramatically conveyed. Candidates tended to comment on how they failed in their duty but without fully exploring the consequences of that failure. Only a few responses selected material to focus securely on Elesin's shame and Olunde committing ritual suicide in his place; or his lost honour as a father while looking around to blame everyone else and finally confessing his own failing.

There was often very little written about Pilkings and frequent misunderstanding of his role. However, there was awareness of his duty to stop the ritual going ahead and of his determination to ensure that the Prince's visit and the ball would not be affected. There was also some good understanding of his insensitivity to Yoruban Culture. One common misconception was that Pilkings is a police officer or Chief of Police. He is a District Officer – an administrator. Another was that Yoruba is a place instead of an ethnic group/tribe.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) Successful answers understood the context of the passage. Stanley has discovered the loss of Belle Reve. Blanche, knowing he is suspicious, tries to distract him with her usual flirtatious tactics but this only drives him further away which increases her determination to make an impression on him, and his irritation with her, creating increasing tension. Many understood Stanley's anger and frustration with her tactics and his violent responses possibly foreshadowing what is to come. One strong response pointed out that Blanche does not like 'primary colours' but young, effeminate poetic men – the very antithesis of Stanley. There was some appreciation of Stella's attempt to defuse the situation and of the contrast between Blanche's manner of speaking and Stanley's more blunt responses to her.

Many responses usefully explored the violence that erupts in the slamming down of the bottle, as Blanche tries to deflect the subject of the house, noting how it foreshadows the much worse violence to come. Some candidates focused also on Blanche's motivation here, referencing her past experiences of men; better ones discussed how she might be motivated by guilt or a pathological need to be admired or validated by men; less insightful answers put her behaviour down simply to promiscuity. Stronger candidates were able to make reference to the stage directions in the extract and make valid points in connection with the question.

Weaker answers claimed that Blanche is trying to seduce Stanley or steal him from Stella giving a superficial reading of the text. There is some sexual chemistry but her fake praise of him was read on a surface level.

- (b) This was a popular question with the strongest answers commenting on the stage effects such as the polka tune and blue piano music, the gun shot and the menacing shadows. Many looked effectively at the symbolism of light and the paper lantern, Blanche's excessive vanity and bathing and her desire for 'magic' over realism. The most successful answers were able to consider how her façade deteriorated and how, as this did, her mental state became more unstable.

There was much sympathy expressed for Blanche while exploring her many character flaws and weaknesses. Her lies, her pretentiousness, and her unadvised relationships with younger men were effectively discussed and illustrated. The brutal way Stanley removes her options was also well understood and how her sister chooses her husband in spite of his actions, leaving Blanche utterly exposed and driving her further into neurotic fantasy.

Some candidates focused mainly on discussing how her mental health deteriorated and how different factors played a part, for example, the suicide of her young husband. Less successful answers digressed into a narrative discussion of Blanche rather than exploring how she was a product of her environment

Less successful answers often wrote at some length about the events which had caused Blanche's disturbance rather than Williams's portrayal of it. Some knowledge was shown but narration of the plot is a low-level skill and unlikely to achieve much reward.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Question 4

- (a) The best answers were able to consider how the poor quality of the play caused the reaction in Philostrate and made some insightful comments on the role of leadership and the working classes. They commented on how the play was being described as ludicrous, as the audience knows it will be, and that Theseus generously appreciates the good intention behind it, showing his leadership qualities. They identified the fact that there were contrasts in language 'merry and tragical', 'hot ice' with some knowing the term 'oxymoron' but having identified these they did not always go on to make any point. Some understood that Philostrate was trying to advise Theseus not to watch the performance but the exchange between three relatively insignificant characters proved to be confusing for some candidates.

There was misunderstanding of '*I must confess, made mine eyes water*' with some candidates stating that this was a serious moment as it showed that Philostrate found the play so sad that it made him cry. Very few candidates understood the humour in Philostrate's words. There was also misunderstanding about his relationship with Theseus.

The weakest answers demonstrated little understanding of the question or text and wrote about the rude Mechanicals and about their rehearsals instead of the actual passage.

- (b) This was a popular question. The most successful candidates avoided telling the story, and gave a wider range of reference than just the opening scenes of the play, supporting points with some direct and accurate textual reference. The best answers referred to Helena's '*two cherries on a stem*' speech, the insults '*painted maypole, she was a vixen... though she be but little she is fierce*' where they mock each other's physical and personality traits, providing the richest source of evidence for the 'vivid' portrayal of the relationship. Some candidates understood the significance of the inferiority/superiority complex of Helena and Hermia. A common approach was to write a

character profile of both, making links to their relationship and how it changed due to their love interests. Those who did better focused on the underlying tension inherent from the beginning.

Less successful answers did not know enough specific textual detail to support points leaving little scope for analysis and resulting in a basic retelling of the plot. Candidates need to have memorised a few select quotations to answer the discursive question successfully.

Weaker answers retold the plot and wrote generalised comments about love without much reference to the play. Common misconceptions were that Helena and Hermia were sisters and several candidates mixed up the names of the couples making their argument hard to follow.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) There was a wide range of responses to this question. The strongest answers commented on audience response to elucidate the power and tragedy of the passage. They showed awareness that the dramatic irony is the key. We know Desdemona is innocent and that what she says is true so we feel both exasperation and sorrow at what is happening. The language was explored in some detail, though the power of some of the imagery at the end of the passage '*the eclipse of sun and moon*' was missed as most candidates took a linear approach to work through the passage, failing to reach the end. Dramatic moments such as Desdemona being told erroneously that Cassio is dead and Othello's misunderstanding of her response were considered, though the drama of Emilia knocking on the door was only picked up by a few. The best answers commented on the terms that showed Othello still loved Desdemona.

The symbolism of the handkerchief was well understood and the contrast between this Othello and the one we first see in the play offered strong material. Effective responses also illustrated Desdemona's confusion and panic and Othello's rage effectively. Better responses commented on the changes in Othello's speech patterns and the impact to this and his contradictory language towards Desdemona at this moment, referring to her as both '*sweet soul*' and '*strumpet*'.

Less successful answers focused too much on the context by narrating events and Iago's manipulation rather than the impact of this particular moment in the play and there was also misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Some candidates lost their focus on the extract and wrote extensively about the handkerchief, its origins and what happened to it thinking that Othello killed her with the handkerchief. Candidates thought that Cassio was dead, that Desdemona had given him the handkerchief and that Othello's '*I have no wife*' speech meant he was pleased with what he had done. Others thought that Emilia comes into the room in the passage.

- (b) This was a very popular question. There were some perceptive responses which drew on different interpretations of Iago's views. The most successful candidates could support the points about Iago's disdain and general misogyny with close reference to the text and well-selected, specific textual detail. Most candidates took a plot-based approach on how he uses Desdemona, Emilia and Bianca in his scheming and this generally led to a competent response. It was understood that he has no compunction about leading Othello to kill Desdemona and that he kills his own wife to shut her up. Credit was also given to candidates who used Iago's way of describing Othello's wooing of Desdemona to Brabantio as a further example of his misogyny. Some misconceptions were that Iago wanted to marry Desdemona presumably based on his unconvincing statement that he loves her too.

Many candidates cited Iago's manner of speaking to Emilia, towards whom he shows no affection, speaking to at best with condescension, at worst with a brusque dismissiveness. The best answers demonstrated textual knowledge through quoting Iago's words to illustrate this. These answers focused on all three women, with proportionately less attention to the men whom Iago engages with in the play; weaker response tended to focus on the details of how Iago ensnares Othello featuring Desdemona as a pawn in his game rather than an illustration of Iago's attitude to women. There was much generalisation about the role of women in the 'patriarchal' society.

Weaker candidates gave generalised comments about Iago showing no respect for women, being rude to his wife, and ruining Desdemona's marriage, but with no textual support for the points made. There were many character sketches of Iago with some candidates erroneously commenting that his marriage was wonderful to an adoring wife.

Generally candidates understood his attitudes towards women, but lacked the textual knowledge to give well-supported points. In summarising what was required for high attainment in this question, as indeed with all questions, the first consideration is the need to be relevant. For example, how Iago uses Roderigo says a lot generally about his ruthless cunning, but it is only tangentially relevant to his treatment of women.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/33 Drama (Open Text) 33</p>

Key messages

- Successful answers began by introducing the main thrust of the answer, avoided lengthy historical background or plot summary and maintained focus on three or four main points in direct response to the question.
- Good answers ensured points were developed and supported with detailed reference to the text, often in the form of brief, memorised quotations.
- Strong answers to passage-based questions briefly stated the context of the passage and considered the content of the scene and the effects of the use of language, structure and staging.
- For answers to discursive questions, successful candidates made the best selection of relevant material from the whole text and used it to support a range of three or four directly relevant and developed points.
- Answers were boosted by personal engagement with the text which showed an appreciation of its stagecraft and considered likely audience response.

General comments

Most candidates responded well to their set plays, showing knowledge and understanding of characters' actions and motivations, while the best essays explored the playwright's use of stagecraft and language to achieve specific effects. There were some clearly reasoned and engaged responses. These candidates referred to relevant and detailed textual material in support of their points and addressed the question throughout. Strong answers addressed the terms of the question in a range of three or four salient points and supported them with a careful selection of the most apposite textual material. Candidates less adept at organising their answers often spent too long on relatively minor points and so missed out on the chance to develop points more relevant to the question asked. Candidates at all levels boosted their answers by conveying a lively personal response to the play as it presents on stage.

Successful answers focused on addressing key terms in the question, such as 'vividly', 'memorably', 'powerfully' or 'strikingly', and sustained the link to the question throughout the essay. Some candidates found it helpful to jot down very brief essay plans of a few lines, which noted the three or four points to be made and the most suitable material to use in support of them. The best essays to passage-based questions began by briefly giving the context of the passage to show understanding of its significance within the play, before exploring the passage itself in detail. The best essays to discursive questions began by considering the question and giving three or four key points before developing each one in detail and supporting them with brief, carefully selected and analysed quotations. Some candidates showed a lack of focus on the question by writing long, general introductions, narrating the plot, giving biographical details of the writer, or stating irrelevant social, cultural or historical background to the text. Others seemed to write down everything they knew about a play or character without linking it to the question.

Good answers explored how authors created dramatic effects. They considered how the writer presented characters through their actions and speech and their interactions with others. They explored how the author structured the play to highlight their ideas and entertained the audience by creating tension, humour or intrigue. In strong answers, analysis of the writing of the play explicitly considered its context within a scene and its intended effect on the audience. Other answers sometimes identified a feature of drama, such as foreshadowing or dramatic irony, but did not show understanding of its intended effect. Weaker answers sometimes commented on a feature an audience could not see or hear. An example was punctuation such as an exclamation mark, with the candidate claiming that it made the actor shout. To gain any credit for this, the candidate needed to show understanding of the context – what is the effect of that character shouting that line at that moment? Exclamations are not always intended to be shouted – they convey a character's surprise or emotion and how they are delivered depends on the context.

Centres are reminded that in 2025 the texts *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* will be replaced by *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney and William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) The passage forms the ending to the main part of the play before the epilogue. Candidates who considered this context recognised Ernestine's nearly adult perspective. Most answers were able to pick out aspects of the passage which shed light on the women's relationships.

Strong answers considered how Ernestine always admired Lily for being independent. Lily assures Ernestine she is not a communist, because she has more options for her future which were not open to Lily. They pointed out that Lily calling Ernestine by the shortened 'Ernie' shows the two are close. Lily shows her concern and love for Ernestine by encouraging her to 'find her own 'root' to the truth'. Perceptive answers considered how Lily's work on Ernestine's graduation dress symbolically illustrates how Lily values Ernestine's education because it gives her options for her future. Good answers considered how Ernestine's simple reply 'No?' illustrates how she is now ready to question advice and make reasoned decisions.

Ernestine's fantasy of Lily and Gerte dancing together was often seen as dramatically expressing Ernestine's desire for the two women to be friends. Better answers linked the vision to 'vividly' and gave their personal reaction to its humorous exaggeration. Some answers pointed out the distancing effect of the stage direction placing Lily and Gerte 'facing each other' and saw this as a sign that their relationship remains cold. Perceptive answers considered the subtle overtures of friendship made by Lily offering Gerte a drink, by Gerte touching Lily's shoulder, her attempt to repair their relationship by beginning 'I wish' – perhaps to wish things had been different between them – followed by Lily's embarrassed attempt to fend off Gerte's overture. Developed comments on this interaction considered that even if the two were not close friends, at least they were no longer enemies.

Weaker answers often made general comments based on material from earlier in the play, rather than focusing on the content of the passage, and needed to consider the actions and dialogue of the characters on stage to address 'vividly'.

- (b) There was sympathy expressed for the overwhelming grief Godfrey felt at the death of his wife. Some showed understanding of how Godfrey's belief in Father Devine helped him cope with his grief, with some thoughtful answers claiming that his belief removed some of his responsibility for making decisions. Godfrey's experience of racism in New York was also generally considered as deserving sympathy, with reference to the racist physical attack.

Strong answers addressed 'to what extent' Godfrey deserved sympathy by developing their comments on his grief and religion. Thus, they saw that the extent of Godfrey's grief paralysed him and prevented him from making decisions; and that his unquestioning adherence to the strict rules imposed by Father Devine was selfish because it restricted not only his life but his daughters' too. The unnecessary move to New York and his surprise marriage to Gerte were also seen as being selfish. The shock and ferocity of the physical racist attack was explored sympathetically by a few candidates.

Candidates who had made a very brief plan at the start listing three or four points to include organised their responses well and covered a range of valid points, some including Godfrey's reticence with his daughters, his lack of ambition for Ernestine, and the family's relative poverty. Some candidates spent too long illustrating how Godfrey's grief was portrayed, and so their answer lacked range. Weak answers offered sympathy with only a little general reference to the text as support.

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

Question 2

- (a) Candidates who first established the context of the passage showed a better understanding of the text and some of its deeper implications. It is time for Elesin to fulfil his role as the King's Horseman and to guide the dead king to the world of his ancestors. It was helpful to consider that much of the drama and mystery of the passage is contained in how Elesin is preparing to die to carry out his role. Strong answers recognised how Elesin is deliberately falling into a trance and explored how the stage directions show this in terms such as 'semi-hypnosis', 'in a kind of daze', 'a little breathless' and 'with a solemn finality'. They explored the mysteriousness of Elesin's detailed description of his journey to an afterlife to meet the king. The best answers explored Elesin's dialogue and actions, commenting on the suspense and drama created by the call and response between Elesin and the Praise-Singer and how Elesin only hears 'faintly' as he begins his journey away from the world of the living. His faltering dance steps show him losing strength. The music and drumming add to the dramatic, mesmerising impact of the scene.

Some candidates explored Elesin's exchanges with the Praise-Singer in detail. They considered how the Praise-Singer is making sure Elesin is fulfilling his duty and explored their enigmatic use of traditional Yoruba sayings. They considered the implications of the Praise-Singer again offering to go with Elesin, or to go in his place if necessary; but that at this moment it seems as though Elesin is succeeding in his role.

Other answers quoted parts of the passage and attempted to comment on them, but without an understanding of their context which limited the answer. Weaker answers attempted to explain the role of the King's Horseman, but did not relate this to the passage, or simply narrated parts of the plot.

- (b) Most candidates understood that Pilkings' role as District Officer is to enforce the law, but that in order to do this he does not consider it necessary to understand and empathise with local culture and customs. Stronger answers supported this with examples, such as Pilkings' wearing of Egungun costumes for entertainment thus defiling their sanctity. They understood the deeper implications of Pilkings' attitude, such as his desire to prevent Elesin's attempt at suicide because he believes it is inciting unrest amongst local Yoruba people, a belief reinforced by the insistent loud drumming heard from Yoruba villages. Fewer candidates made the point that although attempting to commit suicide is against British law, the ritual suicide of the King's Horseman forms part of Yoruba culture. The role of the King's Horseman is to die after the king and go with him to the afterlife, thus ensuring the future equilibrium of the Yoruba world. Perceptive candidates suggested that by preventing Elesin's suicide, Pilkings actually incites unrest in Yoruba society.

Many candidates balanced Pilkings' lack of understanding of Yoruba culture and practices with Elesin's own reluctance to fulfil his role, shown in his love of life in the market place, his delaying tactics in marrying the girl, in Iyaloja's angry and bitter accusations of Elesin in the police cell, and in Elesin's own sense of responsibility, shame and suicide at the end. Some explored the tragedy of Olunde's sacrifice of his life in an honourable attempt to fulfil his father's duty in his place.

Responsibility for the failure of Elesin's ritual suicide was divided between Pilkings and Elesin. Weaker candidates struggled to support their arguments with apt textual reference, and the weakest lost focus on the question and narrated Elesin's actions in the market-place, or Pilkings' actions at the ball.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) Candidates who placed the passage in context knew that it occurs the morning after the poker party when Stanley got drunk and hit Stella, and understood that it is because of this that Blanche wants Stella to leave Stanley. Most candidates commented on Blanche's memorable sense of her own social superiority and how she denigrates Stanley by comparing his actions graphically to those of animals. They usually supported comments with apt textual support, such as 'apes ... grunting... and swilling and gnawing and hulking!' Stronger answers explored the effects of such exaggerated and graphic language in cementing the audience's opinions of Stanley as someone who instinctively acts on his desires rather than exercising restraint and reasoning.

Stella's cold response to Blanche in her invitation to her to '...say it all' was clearly seen by some as indicating her disagreement with Blanche's opinion of Stanley. Some also pointed out that her

disagreement with Blanche is memorably shown by the physicality of her welcome as she embraces Stanley 'fiercely'.

Some weaker answers spent too long on Blanche's dialogue rather than moving on to analyse the dramatic staging effects of Stanley hiding as he listens to Blanche viciously insult him. Stronger answers commented on the dramatic irony and how it creates tension for the audience as they wait for Stanley's reaction. Others made insightful comments comparing Stanley to a predator ominously waiting to ambush his prey. Perceptive answers considered that the way Stanley refrains from interrupting shows his intelligence and ability to exercise restraint, contrary to Blanche's opinion of him, and how his knowledge of Blanche's opinion of him gives him power. The stage direction describing his animalistic gesture of 'licking his lips' shows how he relishes hearing Blanche's views, which makes him feel justified in hurting her later in the play. How he 'grins' at Blanche indicates his feeling of victory over her as Stella chooses him over her sister, which is significant because at the end of the play, she also chooses to believe Stanley rather than Blanche.

Most candidates made relevant comments on Blanche's memorable comparison of Stanley to animals, with some comment on the effect of Stanley hiding as he listens. Weaker answers needed to explore the writing and staging in more detail.

- (b) Candidates who took a moment to think about how best to approach this question and to select the most relevant supporting material to include, organised their responses well and covered a range of valid points. Some candidates made a brief plan of these points. Good answers commonly considered how Stanley hits Stella during the poker night because she threatens his authority by playing music, how he tells Mitch about Blanche's promiscuous past to sour their relationship, and his rape of Blanche perhaps to get rid of her, to punish her for her lies, from revenge for her views of him – or just because he can. Stronger answers explored the motivations for his cruelty and the effect of his actions on others; some perceptively traced an escalation of intensity and seriousness in his actions in the play.

Most candidates explored Stanley's character to explain his cruelty. They considered how he sees himself as the dominant male in the household, and if this position is threatened, he uses violence to secure it. Stronger answers also considered his psychological cruelty towards Blanche. He toys with her, such as pretending to give her a birthday gift, when he has cruelly bought her a one-way ticket back to Laurel, when he knows she is unwelcome there and unable to return. He destroys her fantasies and exposes her past to Mitch to ruin her chances of marriage. He physically asserts his dominance over her with the rape, with no thought for her physical or mental well-being; and cruelly shows no compassion for her breakdown afterwards, even lying to his wife about it.

The best answers maintained focus on Stanley's cruelty, citing the strongest examples. Others wrote generally about Stanley's character, spending too long on aspects such as his machismo, the physicality of his love for Stella, his anger at Blanche's loss of Belle Reve, or his bonding with male friends in poker and bowling. Weaker answers narrated parts of the play which feature Stanley and asserted he was cruel.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 4

- (a) Candidates often expressed their enjoyment of this play in lively personal responses. The best answers began by placing the passage in context; the mechanicals are in the wood rehearsing their play, when Puck happens upon them; nearby, he has just administered the love potion to a sleeping Titania. Bottom's singing at the end of this passage wakes Titania who promptly falls in love with him.

Most candidates commented well on the entertainment provided by the mechanicals, whose enthusiastic but inexperienced acting is humorous for the audience. Examples given included actors forgetting their cues, misinterpreting their lines and creating absurdities such as men playing 'Wall'. Stronger answers noted the sincerity of the mechanicals' misguided efforts. Perceptive answers considered how Puck is almost part of the audience, since he stays to watch, and he mirrors the audience response. Good answers responded to staging effects, pointing out that Puck is invisible to the mechanicals, which enables him to mock them and create confusion without discovery; some explored the contrasting lyricism of Puck's rhyming speech as he uses magic to

swiftly change his appearance, with the ensuing chaos mirrored in the quick succession of images and sounds he uses.

Some weaker answers did not understand Puck's actions. Some candidates did not comment beyond the rehearsals, and so limited their answers. Others responded well to Puck's mischief in switching Bottom's own head for that of an ass, often pointing out how apt this is, since Bottom is as foolish as asses are supposed to be. Some weaker answers showed confusion: some thought all of Bottom was now an ass, not just his head, and some thought that in the place of his head he now had a donkey's bottom. Some weaker answers agreed with Bottom and thought that the mechanicals were playing a trick on him. Better answers explored the dialogue more accurately and noted the mechanicals' shock and how their fear makes them run off. Stronger answers explored stagecraft and dramatic irony; the audience know that Puck has created the chaos on stage, but the mechanicals do not, and so their extreme reactions are funny. Some candidates commented on the irony of Bottom's comments on 'ass-head' and how he is being made 'an ass', while being unaware of his literal ass-head; and there were perceptive comments on how the banal singing of Bottom reflects his foolish character and compares unfavourably with Puck's exciting rhyming earlier.

The best answers engaged with the context and humour of the passage and explored writing and staging effects. Most answers addressed the mechanicals' attempts at a play rehearsal. Weaker answers knew some of the plot but needed to use detailed textual reference and to show understanding of staging.

- (b) Most candidates recognised that Helena feels she has been treated unfairly. Strong answers selected support from three main areas of the text: early in the play when Helena compares herself unfavourably to Hermia and asks her how she attracts Demetrius so that she can do the same; when Helena follows Demetrius into the wood and begs him to love her, and lastly when the love potion makes both Lysander and Demetrius declare their love for Helena, making her think that the men and Hermia are all playing a trick on her to mock her and she openly accuses her friends of treating her unfairly.

Candidates who made a brief plan which included their main points and the most suitable supporting material, often had well organised answers covering a range of points. Others often used a narrow focus on the text which limited their answers. Those who used apt supporting text wrote stronger answers. The most convincing textual support was in the form of short quotations.

The best answers analysed the effects of some of the language in conveying Helena's hurt feelings. They often discussed how Helena is so desperate for attention from Demetrius that she debases herself to him when she begs him to 'Use me but as your spaniel', begging him to hit her rather than ignore her. There were personal responses which suggested Demetrius does not deserve her love. They reminded us that at the end, Demetrius remains under the love spell, so it is not clear how far his love for Helena is real. Some astute candidates judged that all that mattered for the happy ending to the play was that Helena was content.

Perceptive answers developed their points. Some explored how dramatic irony leads the audience to laugh at Helena's situation, despite her injured feelings; they know about the love potion, and so find humour in the lovers' quarrel. The enchanted men use comically overblown language such as 'O Helen, goddess', and the erstwhile friends, Helena and Hermia, argue with comic intensity which includes threats of violence and name-calling, such as 'you counterfeit, you puppet'. Weaker answers did not include textual detail, or narrated events without analysis or reference to the question; some candidates confused the characters.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) Most answers recognised how Iago portrays himself to Othello as being loyal. Good answers quoted textual support to show Iago's technique, such as how he obsequiously begs Othello's pardon 'For too much loving' him. Strong answers explored the effect of this; it convinces Othello that Iago has Othello's best interests at heart because of his love for him. This in turn leads Othello to trust Iago and focus on what he says instead of his motives in saying it. This allows Iago to cast doubt on Desdemona's honour without incurring suspicion himself. One candidate aptly described Iago's technique as 'sycophantic villainy'.

Most candidates realised that Iago is not actually loyal to Othello. Better answers supported this by stating Iago's motive of revenge (for being passed over for promotion) and the context of the passage. Iago has set up this moment by advising Cassio to ask Desdemona to plead with Othello for his reinstatement. After Iago has raised suspicions of Cassio and Desdemona's relationship, any preference Desdemona expresses for Cassio can only reinforce Othello's suspicions.

Strong answers explored how Iago is portrayed through his dialogue. They commented how he does not lie here by inventing 'proof' of Desdemona's supposed infidelity, which could be refuted. He is subtle and only hints at possible transgressions. The effect of this is to make Othello picture the worst, because he thinks that Iago 'doubtless Sees and knows more...than he unfolds'. Other good answers explored how Iago plays on Othello's weaknesses to provide apparent justification for Desdemona's infidelity. He refers to Othello being an outsider and unaware of how Venetian wives habitually deceive their husbands, he points out that Desdemona deceived her father by marrying, so may also deceive Othello and he hints that Desdemona's love for Othello is 'unnatural' due to their different race. Perceptive answers suggested that all these reasons lessen Othello's trust in Desdemona, until by the end of the passage he is convinced that she is false.

The best answers explored the subtlety of Iago's manipulation of Othello and analysed the dialogue. Some perceptive answers considered the effect of dramatic irony in creating tension, since the audience know Iago is deceiving Othello and that Desdemona is true and so they fear for the outcome. Weaker answers were unsure of Desdemona's honesty; some believed she and Cassio were lovers, and some took Iago's declarations of love and honesty at face value. Others needed to explore the writing of the passage in detail.

- (b)** Most candidates understood that Roderigo is a victim of Iago, who uses him to achieve revenge against Othello for not promoting him. Most understood how Iago claims to be propositioning Desdemona on Roderigo's behalf while cheating him out of money and jewels by pretending to give them to her as tokens of Roderigo's love. Stronger answers showed how Roderigo tries to hold Iago accountable for his failure with Desdemona, but Iago easily quiets his complaints and continues to take advantage of the naïve young nobleman. Thoughtful candidates weighed up how far Roderigo's own character flaws contribute to his falling victim to Iago; Roderigo can not be very intelligent to think that Desdemona's virtue can be bought with expensive gifts, and his morals are questionable to want to try to corrupt Desdemona. Brabantio had not thought him worthy enough to be a suitor for Desdemona, while Iago dismisses him as 'poor trash of Venice'.

Good answers considered other examples of Roderigo being Iago's victim, such as the opening to the play, when Iago uses Roderigo to inform Brabantio of Desdemona's elopement with Othello, while remaining unidentified himself. Iago continues to use Roderigo to further his plans for revenge; Iago persuades Roderigo to start a fight with Cassio, on the grounds that Cassio is a rival for Desdemona's love. Rightly, Roderigo is wary of fighting Cassio, who is a brave and able soldier, but again, Iago is able to convince Roderigo to do what he wants.

Strong answers considered the tragedy of Roderigo's death, when he has become a liability to Iago by finally realising how he has been fooled. He falls victim to Iago's ruthlessness and is tragically killed by him. A few candidates commented on the way the truth about Iago's treachery is confirmed in letters found in Roderigo's pockets, but sadly too late to help Roderigo or to prevent Othello's murderous actions.

The best answers sustained a focus on how Roderigo was duped into following all of Iago's instructions. Some blamed Roderigo's weak morality and intelligence for how easily he was tricked, while others pointed out that Roderigo is not the only character to be cleverly manipulated by Iago. Brief essay plans often helped candidates to cover a range of pertinent points and to use apt textual support, often in the form of short quotation. Weaker answers struggled to remember the part played by Roderigo in any detail; the weakest confused Roderigo with Cassio and so made few relevant points.

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Unseen 41

Key messages

- Candidates are just as likely to choose to write about prose texts.
- Time spent planning a response and an effective first paragraph is usually highly rewarded.
- More successful candidates communicate an overall interpretation of the text from the beginning of their responses.
- Knowledge and surface understanding are generally secure; the discriminator is quality of language analysis.
- Stronger responses see connections across the text, rather than simply working line by line.

General comments

Examiners reported their delight at the way in which candidates responded personally, critically and imaginatively to a range of complex texts set for unseen examination this November. In particular, they were pleased to see a continuing trend among candidates to choose the prose texts: although the poetry question remains the more popular, the gap has narrowed considerably. There is no 'easier option': both texts prompt similar challenges of interpretation with plenty of opportunities to analyse language and effects.

Candidates are advised to spend the first twenty minutes of the exam reading both texts, making their choice and planning their answer. It is a particularly good idea to divide the text into three sections in order to articulate first impressions, key developments and a response to the way the text ends. At each stage, the emphasis should be on the impact the writing makes on the reader, and the writer's deliberate choices of language and effects. Candidates would benefit from highlighting the text on the question paper, focusing on interesting similes, metaphors and other examples of figurative language and on sound effects. In this way, both the overall structure and thrust of the text, and the impact of the ending are noted before beginning to write the response.

It was very noticeable that stronger scripts made a strong impression from their first paragraph and communicated a personal response and interpretation of the text as a whole. Examiners will reward boldness and do not have a particular template of a 'correct' reading. In standardisation, they are encouraged to reward a variety of different readings of ambiguous texts, and to credit the different ways in which candidates support their interpretations. Weaker responses tend to begin by simply restating the question and bullet points or to list a range of linguistic devices which may (or may not) be present in the text. The bullet points are a useful guide to the structure of the text and encourage candidates to identify key devices or changes of focus, and are often used as a paragraph plan. However, they are not intended to be comprehension questions, nor should they limit the candidate's response to the stem question, which always takes priority. Indeed, some very strong responses pay little explicit attention to the bullet points, or integrate them within their own overall reading. The best scripts show a quick grasp of what the text is about, its effect on the reader and how the writer consciously crafts the text for particular effects.

Almost all candidates are able to construct a sound narrative response to the surface meaning of the text, as they see it, with suitable quotation to support. They are able to answer a question which asks 'what' the text is about. However, the question is always a 'how' question, with a focus on the writer's methods and their effect on the reader. Implicit in this is an appreciation of the writer's purpose, answering the question 'why'. It is therefore the quality of analysis which determines the mark awarded, as stronger candidates integrate quotation and comment on effects within their argument, instead of simply using quotation as supporting evidence. At the highest levels, responses have an evaluative element, exploring what makes both individual effects and their contribution to the impact of the whole text so effective. Even weaker scripts showed the ability to identify rhetorical devices; only stronger ones commented articulately on their effect on the reader and engaged with the writer's overall purpose.

A good overall understanding of the structure and direction of the text before beginning to write makes it easier for candidates to make connections across different parts of the writing, and to see key changes and developments. Candidates who work doggedly line by line, or section by section through the text can gradually accumulate more marks as they start to see those connections, or develop their own analysis of detail, but they are rarely as impressive as candidates who can range across the text as a whole and see the writer at work behind individual details, guiding the reader's response to them. In particular, a response is unlikely to be comprehensive unless it tackles the way the text ends, and how that ending has been set up by details observed earlier. A strong response will understand the tone created by the writing, and its effect on mood, both the reader's and that evoked in characters or speakers. Although our questions often focus on characters or call the speaker of the poem 'the poet', a response which shows the 'critical understanding' expected at the higher levels will be aware that these are constructs, and that the mood of the writing is the result of the writer's conscious craft.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem 'The Traveller' is an early poem by the US poet John Berryman first published in 1948.

Many candidates commented on the title 'The Traveller' and speculated on the poet's intention in naming the poem after an anonymous 'third person' while the poem itself is written from a 'first-person' perspective. Most candidates who identified this apparent anomaly assumed this to be an aspect of the poet's intention to create 'a sense of mystery'. Most candidates used the bullet-pointed list either to structure their answers or to inform their interpretations of the poem.

Some candidates linked the poem's title with the structure of the poem, suggesting that the first three, brief, stanzas – all beginning with the same phrases, 'they pointed me out' – revealed the speaker's inclination for travel. Three distinct locations: the 'highway', the 'beach' and 'the station' are covered in rapid succession, emphasising, for some, the speed with which the traveller moves from one place to another. Some candidates also noted that no specific method of transport to or from these locations is clearly identified. Most candidates remarked upon the repetition of the phrase, 'They pointed me out'. Some suggested that the poet wished to emphasise the distinction between 'me' and the anonymous 'they' who uniformly found something remarkable/undesirable about 'the traveller'. Many candidates suggested, in the course of their analysis of this use of repetition, that the poem is about 'difference', 'discrimination' 'segregation' or 'prejudice'. Some candidates remarked on the preponderance of personal pronouns in the poem, 'they', 'them', 'I', 'me', 'we', 'he', 'his'. A small number of candidates noted that there are no references to 'she' and concluded that the 'couple' might be two men, whom the traveller follows for reasons best known to himself.

Candidates suggested a variety of types of difference that might be being targeted by 'they' including differences in race, creed, sexual identity and physical disability. Some cited the traveller's 'curious way of holding his head' as a sign of this difference, whichever type of difference they suspected. Some candidates assumed that the 'they' who were pointing out the 'speaker', are all the same 'people' in each of the locations: highway, beach and station. Some thought that the 'they' refers to the 'couple' who feature in the fourth stanza. Others thought that the 'pointers' are each different individuals, all of whom recognise something 'alien' in the speaker. Some candidates suggested that the speaker is indeed an 'alien' from another planet or galaxy or time, which accounts for him being viewed as 'different' and that possibly the word 'time' is missing from the title and that the poet is dealing with inter-planetary or time travel. These candidates suggested that the poet/traveller is from another place/space/time/species, contributing to the 'mystery' of the traveller.

Many candidates commented upon the way the poet follows the three short stanzas with a single longer stanza which 'takes place' on a train. The poetic voice states that everyone took 'the same train' and were headed to 'the same place'. Opinion was divided between those that believed that this is a straightforward description of a popular train journey to a popular place, and those who suspected that the whole poem could be read as a metaphor for the journey of life where the destination of 'death' becomes the 'great leveller'. Candidates who had adopted a literal interpretation of the poem struggled to unravel meaning from the fourth stanza. Some suggested that the traveller is merely 'passing time' by studying 'maps' and trying to 'name the effects of motion on the travellers'. Others interpreted this as the traveller's official occupation being connected with the railway system. These candidates sometimes linked the 'guard's' suspicious looks, 'twice, thrice, thoughtfully and hard' with his fear that the traveller might be some kind of railway inspector, possibly travelling 'incognito'. Those who were inclined to believe that the 'traveller' is an alien saw the

studying of 'merely maps' to be part of a plan to orientate himself and that the study of 'the effects of motion on the travellers' is to enable him to observe and replicate his fellow travellers' responses to the movement of the train, so as to 'fit in' and discourage the kind of unwelcome attention and 'pointing out' that his appearance had occasioned in stanzas 1 –3.

Stanza 4 also offered a challenge to candidates in relation to the couple. Those candidates who used the bullet points to guide their answers were convinced by the reference to 'the relationship between the traveller and the couple he observes' that they were being prompted to identify a blood relationship, for example, such as being their son, or the cast-off partner of one or other member of the 'couple'. This caused some candidates to enter something of a critical 'blind alley'. Quite often, the couple was taken to represent the state of 'partnership' that the traveller aspires to. A significant number of candidates suggested that the traveller is a 'stalker'. Candidates who attempted to support their theories from the text looked at the reference to, and possible significance of 'the curse and blessings of that couple'. Some deduced from this that the traveller is some sort of angel, guarding the entrance to heaven. Others believed him to be omniscient, or at least to possess some supernatural qualities; many concluded that the traveller is actually 'Death' personified.

Others wrestled with the notion of the couple having been 'deceived' at the station and yet having 'courage'. More than a few candidates, not implausibly, associated the station and the train and the couple's descent from that train with events from the holocaust and the trains that carried unsuspecting and suspecting victims, alike, to the death camps. A number of candidates remarked on the fact that, despite having been singled out for some 'abnormality' or difference from others in the first part of the poem, the traveller ends the poem in the company of others, the use of the phrase, 'I descended too' finally linking him to the rest of the human race.

Amongst this myriad of interpretations, most candidates demonstrated an earnest attempt to penetrate the possible meanings of the poem and to apply their critical skills to explore its poetic qualities in an attempt to solve the mystery of 'The Traveller'.

Question 2

The prose extract was taken from Bernadine Evaristo's 2013 novel, *Mr Loverman*.

Responses to the prose were less varied, in terms of interpretative ideas, than answers to **Question 1** but there was still a wide range of achievement. Many candidates took quite a romantic view of the reported events of the story which was often represented as Carmel's 'discovery' that she loves Barry and recognises him as the 'cream of the crop'. Others appreciated the difference in attitudes between the older narrative voice, now that of a grandmother, and the younger 'heroine' of the recollections – the schoolgirl, Carmel.

Most candidates saw through Barry in a way that 'young' Carmel did not and recognised that Barry manipulates Carmel into seeing him as superior to her. More than a few struggled with the notion in the introductory material that mentioned the time Carmel 'agreed to marry her husband Barry' since, in the given extract, there is no explicit mention of a proposal. Almost all candidates used the bullet points to structure their responses.

The 'stream of consciousness' format was challenging for some candidates who perhaps had not previously encountered such writing in their studies. The writer's use of second person address to herself also posed a problem for some candidates who were apparently confused about who the 'you' is meant to be. This led some to believe that it is Barry who was crying or that Barry was boastfully calling himself the 'cream of the crop'. More than a few candidates thought that Barry was actually an 'archaeologist', by profession, and that the comment that Barry was 'clever enough for both of you' signified that he was in fact highly educated and, therefore, really was cleverer than Carmel.

Most managed a response to the first bullet point, showing awareness of Carmel's irritation at Barry and how her dismissal of him effected a change in him. Candidates' interpretation of the 'drama' of the moment was sometimes limited to ideas of anger and hurt. Most candidates were able to identify a sense of regret in Carmel's reaction to Barry's evident shock at being rejected. In stronger answers, candidates commented on how everything 'froze' for Barry and Carmel while the rest of the world went on around them, in dramatic fashion. Some candidates noted that while Barry was 'still', the rest of the world in Carmel's line of vision was moving – the 'horse and cart passed', Andrina 'rode past', Dr Carter's Chevrolet 'juddered past' – all leaving Barry and Carmel statically 'watching' one another. Some commented that the way in which every detail of the scene stayed in Carmel's mind, decades later, showed the significance of the moment and captured the bitter-sweet nature of the memory. Others noted the negative imagery of the 'black pineapples' and the

'terminally ill Chevrolet' and how this foreshadowed Carmel's 'regrettable' decision. Many commented on Carmel's sudden fixation on Barry, as she does not bother to wave the fly off her face, entranced by him, 'standing there in the rising morning heat.' A few candidates commented on the way the sun glinted off Barry, presenting him as an idealised character, despite his dusty sandals and 'sweaty patches' under his arms.

Almost all candidates appreciated that Barry was subtly manipulating Carmel into changing her mind about him. Some admired Barry's ability to persuade Carmel to reconsider him as a potential husband, while others interpreted his methods as downright manipulative and 'guilt-tripping'. Some candidates offered the insight that Carmel herself was insecure enough about her popularity or attractiveness to be susceptible to his 'charms'. A good number of candidates picked up on the idea of Carmel's attraction to Barry growing when he physically manoeuvres her into a seated position beside him. The irony of the juxtaposition of the words 'prodding' and 'gently' was not lost on some candidates who interpreted the 'slow-punched' arm as a perverse way of wooing a woman. Nevertheless, the accompanying appreciation of 'the heat coming through his side' suggested that Barry had indeed succeeded in penetrating Carmel's 'sourpuss' exterior and was on his way to winning her heart. Others were apparently oblivious to the writer's ironic presentation of Barry as a 'romantic hero'.

Most candidates commented on Carmel's reflection on the fact that having been labelled 'sweet girl', 'you had to be sweet all the time'; with several candidates making disapproving comments about Barry's 'coercive behaviour'. Most candidates recognised what Carmel 'gave up when she married' and that she had been a 'high achiever' at school. Many candidates admired Carmel for putting 'love' above school and appeared not to appreciate the regretful tone, concluding that she was happy because she 'got the cream of the crop'.

In stronger answers, candidates appreciated the irony of 'clever enough for both of you' and the sardonic tone of 'you can not be too clever or you would not catch man'. Confident candidates commented on Carmel's listing of her achievements as evidence of how significant they were to her and several commented on the pressure to marry Barry brought about by the 'better looking', and 'more attractive' observations on him. Occasionally candidates were distracted by the sexual politics implied in the notion of 'catching a man' and lost focus on the text. Very few commented on the phrase 'oh to swing higher' line, but some candidates did, and they also noted the repetition of the rhetorical, 'what you got' and its implications of a 'hollow' triumph.

The most successful answers looked at the text as a whole and showed awareness of language, structure and the retrospective viewpoint. They noted the absence of capital letters, where capital letters were to be expected; they noted the 'stream of consciousness' technique and the occasional mix of tenses, they commented on the unconventional use of paragraphing.

It was clear from some responses that candidates were working through the passage without having a clear overview, so there were contradictions within answers as candidates discovered or uncovered more about the presentation of the relationship between Carmel and Barry, perhaps realising, belatedly, that this is no ordinary 'happy-ever-after' story.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/42 Unseen 42</p>
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It was very noticeable that stronger scripts made a strong impression from their first paragraph and communicated a personal response and interpretation of the text as a whole. Examiners will reward boldness and do not have a particular template of a 'correct' reading. In standardisation, they are encouraged to reward a variety of different readings of ambiguous texts, and to credit the different ways in which candidates support their interpretations. Weaker responses tend to begin by simply restating the question and bullet points or to list a range of linguistic devices which may (or may not) be present in the text. The bullet points are a useful guide to the structure of the text and encourage candidates to identify key devices or changes of focus and are often used as a paragraph plan. However, they are not intended to be comprehension questions, nor should they limit the candidate's response to the stem question, which always takes priority. Indeed, some very strong responses pay little explicit attention to the bullet points or integrate them within their own overall reading. The best scripts show a quick grasp of what the text is about, its effect on the reader and how the writer consciously crafts the text for particular effects.

Almost all candidates are able to construct a sound narrative response to the surface meaning of the text, as they see it, with suitable quotation to support. They can answer a question which asks 'what' the text is about. However, the question is always a 'how' question, with a focus on the writer's methods and their effect on the reader. Implicit in this is an appreciation of the writer's purpose, answering the question 'why'. It is therefore the quality of analysis which determines the mark awarded, as stronger candidates integrate quotation and comment on effects within their argument, instead of simply using quotation as supporting evidence. At the highest levels, responses have an evaluative element, exploring what makes both individual effects and their contribution to the impact of the whole text so effective. Even weaker scripts showed the ability to identify rhetorical devices; only stronger ones commented articulately on their effect on the reader and engaged with the writer's overall purpose.

A good overall understanding of the structure and direction of the text before beginning to write makes it easier for candidates to make connections across different parts of the writing, and to see key changes and developments. Candidates who work doggedly line by line, or section by section through the text can gradually accumulate more marks as they start to see those connections, or develop their own analysis of detail, but they are rarely as impressive as candidates who can range across the text as a whole and see the writer at work behind individual details, guiding the reader's response to them. In particular, a response is unlikely to be comprehensive unless it tackles the way the text ends, and how that ending has been set up by details observed earlier. A strong response will understand the tone created by the writing, and its effect on mood, both the reader's and that evoked in characters or speakers. Although our questions often focus on characters or call the speaker of the poem 'the poet', a response which shows the 'critical understanding' expected at the higher levels will be aware that these are constructs, and that the mood of the writing is the result of the writer's conscious craft.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem 'Clockwork' by the London poet and educator Jacob Sam-La Rose, was first published in 2006. Candidates responded to this poem with a range of thoughtful ideas and some interesting interpretations of the man's thoughts and feelings. The question and bullet points were very open, and the poem could justifiably support antithetical interpretations: the man welcomed the night as it made him free to express himself or the man dreaded the night as it made him feel trapped. Candidates were able to look at the poem's own binary oppositions and sensory language in order to support their interpretations. Many viewed the man as depressed, trapped in a difficult relationship, in hospital or a psychiatric ward and desperate to connect with the outside world and break away from his confines. Some felt he also felt repressed by the outside world at night, while others believed that he envied their liveliness and purposive activity.

The opening line 'Shadows come to power' proved to be effective opening in engaging candidates who often commented on the use of personification and connotations associated with shadows and night-time, which were mostly seen as negative forces. For many candidates, this was a sign that the poet was haunted by powers beyond his control. The idea of darkness as a more than literal description and its contrast with light was a binary opposition used by the poet which candidates commented upon successfully. Many highlighted the choice of the verb 'defied' to present the idea of a power struggle or an emotional conflict between darkness and light and how this could be related to conflict within the man himself, well-articulated by one candidate: *'night might make him feel oppressed and vulnerable as it restricts his vision...as darkness envelops the outside like the reign of a tyrant'*.

The closed window in the second stanza was seen as a symbol of entrapment or confinement, expressing the feelings the man in the poem has about being confined to the room so that he can only view the outside world from a detached perspective. The bullet point suggesting to the candidates that they focus the effect of the night on the man's senses was successfully used by candidates to explore the alliterative links between the 'soft-edged stench of bleach' and the 'sterile sheets'. Some found the sibilance sinister while others noted the clash between the sensuous compound adjective 'soft-edged' and the harsh noun 'stench'. The smell of the bleach and the limitations of his other senses (his *'sense of hearing seems to be numbed by the night'*), led some candidates to link this to how the speaker was overpowered by his sanitised environment, trapped in a hospital-like existence or in someone's obsession with hygiene. Higher level responses noted that the suppression of the sense of sight had enhanced the senses of smell and touch.

The introduction of the female 'she turns' and the verb 'unlocks' in the third stanza helped candidates to develop the idea of entrapment and the man's inability to escape, even though he would like to. Whether he detaches himself from a lover or a mother is never clear, but as she is unconscious the poet still feels alone. The poet's use of caesura was felt to contribute to his detachment. By exploring the metaphor of unlocking candidates were able to make tentative comments about the man's thoughts and feelings in this situation, while the poet's use of enjambment as the man opens the curtains and presses his face against the closed window was often felt to show his desire to make contact with the outside world, suggesting he is drawn to the night. As one candidate put it: *'the verb "unlocks" suggests the man freed himself from the woman – he got some kind of freedom but not enough or not the kind of freedom he desires. The man "wants to press his face" the phrase continues into a new stanza as he "wants to press his face against the glass, feel a cold shock blaze across his cheek" '.* While another wrote: *'having some sort of feeling in his body even a somewhat torturous feeling ... illustrates just how much he seeks freedom'*. Some suggested that the stiff and mechanical nature of his movements suggests how the man remains trapped.

Many candidates were drawn particularly to the fourth stanza describing the man's face against the glass, especially the description of how he felt a 'cold shock/blaze across his cheek'. Many candidates wrote about the juxtaposition of heat and cold and related this back to the internal conflict within the man of opposing emotions created by his situation. Some thought he felt the heat of desire for the outside world but was frozen out. Stronger candidates traced the development of ideas throughout the poem e.g.: *'The sudden enjambment between verses in "He want to press his face/against the glass" highlights a change in tone. The previously numb persona is desperate to feel something – anything – even if it is painful like "a cold shock blaze across his cheek". The oxymoron of the cold glass blazing a path across his cheek like fire emphasizes his strong desire'*. Some perceptive responses looked closely at his desire to make some mark on the window: for some the 'mist and spread' of his breath was his desire to prove he was still alive, while for others, he wanted to make a deeper impression on the world outside, so that *'some important part of him'* could be noticed. For some, this was the man making himself quite literally visible to the world outside, while others believed it was a metaphor for his art or his writing.

Higher-level scripts tended to be more confident in engaging with the imagery of the last two stanzas and linking them to an interpretation of the rest of the poem. The link between the 'clockwork of tailgates', and the title of the poem was especially significant for them, some making the connection with the man's desire to be swept up in the life outside, whilst it just moved on 'inexorably' and indifferent to him. One candidate argued cogently that *'the movement of these lights correlates to the repetitive motion of a clock's intimate inner workings that move the hands of time'*. Some contrasted the purposeful movement of the traffic and the man's lack of purpose, or inability to escape. Some felt that the day was now dawning, with others going to work, while the man was stuck in his hospital room. Strong responses explored the imagery of 'hulking' and 'blind weight' to present heaviness in the atmosphere outside the window and link it to the heaviness of his emotions, or to an ominous future. For the final couplet, the most apt comment came from a candidate who stated that it *'... clinches the idea developed in the previous five tercets by describing the massive forms in nature. It contrasts the image of lightweight clouds with "hulking forms" and the "blind weight" of the air makes it feel as if we are all minor, insignificant cogs part of some greater clockwork'*. Thus, the strongest response had a conceptual approach to the poem and its title relating it to universal themes of the human condition, the passing of time and inevitability of our own, or others', mortality.

Question 2

Responses to the extract from Charlotte Brontë's 1853 novel *Villette* showed an impressive familiarity with some of the conventions of nineteenth-century literature, and of the Gothic genre in particular. Candidates were less daunted by the complex syntax, elaborate vocabulary and extended metaphors than might have been expected.

Many candidates answered this question successfully, showing a clear understanding of the effect of this unsettling experience on the narrator, Lucy. The bullet points were successfully followed and the question answered in a chronological manner. However, even more impressive were those responses which showed a greater conceptual overview of the author's purpose, linking the descriptions of the unsettling nature of the moonlit scene, Lucy's thoughts about her past and about her present uncertainty and an apparition which may or may not be supernatural. The writer provides no clear explanation of the nature of the apparition here, and indeed the experience remains ambiguous throughout the rest of the novel, so there was plenty of opportunity for candidates to make their own connection. It might be helpful to give a candidate example of a brief but strong introduction which clearly foregrounds the writer's purpose and methods: *'The writer switches between two parallels of past and present to intensify the night's atmosphere, metaphorically makes reference to Lucy's life and uses a more descriptive than narrative style of writing to increase the dramatic effect.'*

The details of the unusual atmosphere were analysed by selecting key features such as the 'moonlight', the 'luminous haze', the 'peculiar mist' and the 'still' night and the way these details created a strange, unsettling atmosphere. Most successful candidates saw the stillness and clarity of the air as a metaphor for how Lucy clearly feels her life is also at a standstill. The majority of candidates commented successfully on the flashback and how the atmosphere reminded Lucy of an event a year ago in England. There were some confusions – some thought Lucy was seeing an aurora borealis in the present – but most realised she was making a connection between two unusual atmospheres both of which she read as a reflection of her own unsettled state of mind. Strong responses brought out the 'electrical' quality in the air as a foreshadowing of the later supernatural appearance or noticed that the atmosphere acted 'in strange sort' on Lucy so that it was possible to attribute later events to her overworked imagination. Some responded intensely to the 'mystical' element of the description or its psychological implications: one candidate wrote *'the mist is not just something of nature but it displays how clouded Lucy's mind feels as she is thinking about her past life'*.

Candidates with a clear understanding of the text (Level 6 and above) were more likely to make detailed comments about the imagery of war – identifying this as an extended metaphor that conveyed Lucy's thoughts about life. Those who successfully did this were able to make effective links to her state of mind: 'If life were a war, it seemed my destiny to conduct it single-handed' and her 'battle' that had to be fought. Stronger responses, using the introductory rubric, made the connection with her life in the boarding school or possible unhappiness in her life abroad. Less successful readings were more literal: Lucy had been in the army, she did not get enough to eat, or she had been watching an army mustering when in England.

However, a clear understanding required appreciation that Lucy as a narrator employs a series of connected metaphors to show her emotional struggles and embattled feelings. Appreciation of this method enabled candidates to perceive that Lucy was at a pivotal moment in her life, when significant decisions had to be made. Some felt she was already showing that she is in some way disconnected from the real world around her. Many candidates successfully identified the use of rhetorical questions and religious allusions to the role of God in her decision. The writer is using Lucy's choices of language and imagery to convey Lucy's character, including her fatalism and religious influence: good candidates could link the quasi-spiritual description of the aurora borealis as the 'swift ascent of messengers from below the north star to the dark, high keystone of heaven's arch' with 'God might destine me to gain' and observe how this language makes it more credible that Lucy would see and believe in the supernatural nature of the ghost, not least because she is desperate for some kind of sign or divine intervention. Alternatively, from a reader's perspective, the veiled figure was sometimes seen as representative of Lucy's own turmoil and lack of inner peace.

Candidates were indeed often at their strongest and most confident in dealing with the ghostly and the Gothic in the final section, where we are not intended to see this purely as a metaphor. The final bullet – the dramatic encounter with the veiled figure elicited some confident interpretations and successful answers linked this to earlier comments about the character of Lucy and her strength and resilience as displayed in the first part of the text. Candidates relished the idea of Lucy as an empowered female character, who 'neither fled nor shrieked' but takes time to investigate and even challenge the apparition. Nevertheless, Lucy herself says that she was desperate rather than brave but that 'desperation will often suffice to fill the post and do the work of courage', and strong responses noted that this continues the metaphor of life as a war in which Lucy had to fight her battles single-handed. Good responses noted the change in syntax here, as long, descriptive sentences give way to brief and very brief sentences: 'She was there still. I spoke. One strong candidate noted that *'the writing imitates Lucy's breathlessness and keeps the reader on the edge of their seats'*. Key methods that were explored included contrast or juxtaposition, such as the play of light and shadows or the use of white and black symbolism to describe the physical appearance of the 'ghost' to confuse the reader about whether the apparition is good or evil, or whether a bride or a symbol of death. She appears inhuman – 'she had no face' – yet her eyes view Lucy and seem to her to be inviting a connection. Later in the passage, the figure's 'recession' contrasts with the way Lucy advances towards her. Candidates commented on the use of dialogue and the first-person narrator and her choice of verbs to convey the dramatic impact of the moment. Some noticed how Lucy's challenge to the apparent 'ghost' – 'If you have any errand to man, come back and deliver it' – reflects her earlier semantic field of the supernatural and her apparent fatalism.

Candidates who answered this question were successful in understanding the key ideas of the passage and the effect on the reader with well-chosen textual references and a range of methods to explore the writer's technique. Most enjoyed the ambiguities of the writing and the way in which the ending is anti-climactic and leaves the reader in suspense.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/43
Unseen 43

Key messages

- Candidates are just as likely to choose to write about prose texts.
- Time spent planning a response and an effective first paragraph is usually highly rewarded.
- More successful candidates communicate an overall interpretation of the text from the beginning of their responses.
- Knowledge and surface understanding are generally secure; the discriminator is quality of language analysis.
- Stronger responses see connections across the text, rather than simply working line by line.

General comments

Examiners reported their delight at the way in which candidates responded personally, critically and imaginatively to a range of complex texts set for unseen examination this November. In particular, they were pleased to see a continuing trend among candidates to choose the prose texts: although the poetry question remains the more popular, the gap has narrowed considerably. There is no 'easier option': both texts prompt similar challenges of interpretation with plenty of opportunities to analyse language and effects.

Candidates are advised to spend the first twenty minutes of the exam reading both texts, making their choice and planning their answer. It is a particularly good idea to divide the text into three sections, in order to articulate first impressions, key developments and a response to the way the text ends. At each stage, the emphasis should be on the impact the writing makes on the reader, and the writer's deliberate choice of language and effects. Candidates would benefit from highlighting the text on the question paper, focusing on interesting similes, metaphors and other examples of figurative language and on sound effects. In this way, both the overall structure and thrust of the text, and the impact of the ending are noted before beginning to write the response.

It was very noticeable that stronger scripts made a strong impression from their first paragraph and communicated a personal response and interpretation of the text as a whole. Examiners will reward boldness and do not have a particular template of a 'correct' reading. In standardisation, they are encouraged to reward a variety of different readings of ambiguous texts, and to credit the different ways in which candidates support their interpretations. Weaker responses tend to begin by simply restating the question and bullet points or to list a range of linguistic devices which may (or may not) be present in the text. The bullet points are a useful guide to the structure of the text and encourage candidates to identify key devices or changes of focus and are often used as a paragraph plan. However, they are not intended to be comprehension questions, nor should they limit the candidate's response to the stem question, which always takes priority. Indeed, some very strong responses pay little explicit attention to the bullet points, or integrate them within their own overall reading. The best scripts show a quick grasp of what the text is about, its effect on the reader and how the writer consciously crafts the text for particular effects.

Almost all candidates are able to construct a sound narrative response to the surface meaning of the text, as they see it, with suitable quotation to support. They are able to answer a question which asks 'what' the text is about. However, the question is always a 'how' question, with a focus on the writer's methods and their effect on the reader. Implicit in this is an appreciation of the writer's purpose, answering the question 'why'. It is therefore the quality of analysis which determines the mark awarded, as stronger candidates integrate quotation and comment on effects within their argument, instead of simply using quotation as supporting evidence. At the highest levels, responses have an evaluative element, exploring what makes both individual effects and their contribution to the impact of the whole text so effective. Even weaker scripts showed the ability to identify rhetorical devices; only stronger ones commented articulately on their effect on the reader and engaged with the writer's overall purpose.

A good overall understanding of the structure and direction of the text before beginning to write makes it easier for candidates to make connections across different parts of the writing, and to see key changes and developments. Candidates who work doggedly line by line, or section by section through the text can gradually accumulate more marks as they start to see those connections, or develop their own analysis of detail, but they are rarely as impressive as candidates who can range across the text as a whole and see the writer at work behind individual details, guiding the reader's response to them. In particular, a response is unlikely to be comprehensive unless it tackles the way the text ends, and how that ending has been set up by details observed earlier. A strong response will understand the tone created by the writing, and its effect on mood, both the reader's and that evoked in characters or speakers. Although our questions often focus on characters or call the speaker of the poem 'the poet', a response which shows the 'critical understanding' expected at the higher levels will be aware that these are constructs, and that the mood of the writing is the result of the writer's conscious craft.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem 'Portable Paradise' was published by the British-Trinidadian poet Roger Robinson in 2019. The question asked candidates to discuss how the poet conveyed his idea of paradise in the poem. Candidates responded well to both text and task, engaging in a lively fashion with the idea or conceit of a paradise of one's own depicted as if it were a physical object or possession that one could carry around and access in times of trouble or stress. Indeed, a number of candidates commented with a certain ruefulness how such an item would be of great use and solace to them personally during the pressures of the examination period which they were currently experiencing!

Candidates showed knowledge (AO1) of the 'history' of the paradise and how the ideas regarding it had been passed down to the poet/speaker by his grandmother, as well as her instructions as to how it should be treated and used. There was an understanding (AO2) of the deeply personal nature of the paradise and also how it needed to be closely guarded or treasured, carried at all times on his person and concealed, hidden from the prying eyes of others. For many, this emphasis on secrecy and privacy suggested the vulnerability or fragility of the paradise and how others might wish to 'steal' it from him. There was understanding of the ways in which the paradise can provide comfort and relief for the speaker in times of pressure and stress. It provides hope and motivation too for the future, a means by which the writer can keep going despite all the troubles which life brings, these being felt 'sustained and daily'. A number of candidates showed clear understanding of how the paradise provides the poet with a reassuring reminder or confirmation of his identity and his familial or national roots ('hum its anthem under your breath') when he finds himself perhaps in an unfamiliar or threatening world.

In terms of a critical exploration of the text (AO3), something of a discriminator was the manner in which candidates dealt with the poem's central conceit – that of a 'paradise' which is described as if it were a physical, tangible object small enough to be carried around everywhere in one's pocket and yet one which is also more expansive, multi-faceted and abstract than this. Candidates were steered here by the second bullet point which prompted them to discuss how the poet 'senses' his paradise. Most candidates commented on its 'ridges' and what these might feel like. There was comment on how a tactile connection such as this can provide psychological and emotional comfort with particularly sensitive responses commenting on the connotations of something both soothing and finely delicate in the use of the verb 'trace'. Many responses moved into a reflection on what the ridges might represent or signify – mountain ranges, possibly, the landscape of home? A similar approach was applied to the olfactory imagery of the 'piney scent' left on the handkerchief in the pocket, something which conjured for many a land of forests, an open-air space full of the fresh, revivifying aromas and fragrances of the natural world. Many well-developed responses ran with this idea of the speaker's paradise as being rooted in Nature. There was a discussion of the poet's use of colour in the visual images of 'white sands' and 'green hills' and their perceived connotations of purity, innocence, verdant fertility and so forth. A focus on the restorative powers of Nature was carried through into the metaphor of the lamp in the light of the morning sun drenching the grey or darkness of the speaker's present surroundings in brightness and hope.

High-scoring scripts were frequently marked with an attention to the formal and structural aspects of the text. Some candidates picked up on how it seems to begin in mid-conversation, as it were, with 'And if I speak...'. This served to emphasise for some the intimate and informal nature and tone of the poem, something itself enhanced by the simplicity of the diction. Significant here also was the use of the second-person address ('you'/'yours') and how this slips between signifying the poet when being spoken to by his grandmother and

the reader when being addressed by the poet. The effect of this feature is both to draw the reader into the confidence of the speaker as he gives his advice but also to suggest that each individual reader can have their own personal and 'portable' paradise. The specific features of the poet's own imagined perfect world thus become merely illustrative – we can each create our own world for ourselves, drawing on our own identity, background and experience, our own memories and dreams. This is an excellent example of how analytical and interpretative responses to a text (AO3 and AO4) ideally work in tandem, the text's meaning (or, more properly, its plurality of possible meanings) being drawn out by means of a close attention to the writing and the methods and techniques at work. With regard to formal or syntactical elements, there is a tendency maybe at present for candidates to strain to make a little too much of details of punctuation but the observation, for example, as to how the word 'concealed' is bracketed off from the rest of the line by caesural pause was convincing and helpful in underscoring ideas of secrecy and so forth. Likewise, too much weight can often be given to the manifold effects of enjambment but the easy play of run-on and end-stopped lines here certainly adds to the sense of spoken rhythms and an informality of address. The simplicity of form without stanza divisions and the brevity of the piece also contribute to this effect of intimacy and directness.

As can be seen from the above, there was much scope for candidates to develop a personal interpretative response to the poem. Some commented perceptively on its particular pertinence in times of migration and displacement with individuals exposed to loneliness, oppression or alienation. In boxed-in places of transience ('hotel, hostel or hovel'), one's paradise becomes both freedom and rootedness, a homecoming which can be nightly re-enacted. Some read in the poem the liberating, creative power of imagination and memory, the image of emptying the paradise 'onto a desk' a metaphor for the craft of the poet spilling out his words under the light of the lamp.

Question 2

This question was based on an extract from J. G. Ballard's 1962 dystopian novel *The Drowned World* set within a post-apocalyptic scenario of rising sea waters and submerged cities. Candidates were invited to focus on how the writer presents the strangeness of the underwater world in the passage. The narrative movement of the piece was reasonably straightforward for candidates to grasp, while the density and richly textured nature of the descriptive writing offered much material with which they were able to develop an analytical, critical response.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate by means of apposite textual reference a knowledge (AO1) of the nature of the scene in which human streets and buildings have been submerged under the waters and have become populated by strange flora and fauna – giant seaweed fronds, molluscs, predatory squid and the like. As readers, we see this new world through the eyes of the central protagonist, Kerans, who makes his way from the surface to the sea floor and who approaches the focal point of his dive, the submerged and derelict Planetarium. Strong responses manifested a clear understanding (AO2) of the threatening and dangerous aspects of the scene but also the elements of beauty and awe as well. Candidates were able to discuss how the writer presents the vulnerability of Kerans's situation, alone in this dark, hazardous world and connected only to the upper world by the fragile threads of his air-line and telephone cable. Strong responses, however, also noted how the writer suggests the scientist Kerans's excitement and interest, too, even a sense of comfort and homecoming in his enigmatic response 'Feels like home'. High-scoring scripts characteristically displayed a clear understanding of how the unsettling and dream-like nature of the scene is rooted in the central idea of a familiar world – the everyday urban world of offices, windows, street-lights and the like – having become defamiliarised, made mysterious and strange. It is as if the human world has been taken over, conquered perhaps, by an alien underwater one which appears to care nothing for Man and his works.

As already suggested, Examiners encountered much excellent close analysis of the writing and the effects achieved (AO3). Illustrating the notion of a man-made world superseded or subverted by a natural one, a number of candidates commented on how the sky which the Planetarium – a symbol of human scientific achievement – once reflected is now turned upside down and is full of angel fish, iridescent and beautiful, 'gleaming like silver stars'. In contrast, 'the once polished aluminium roof' of the building has become 'dull and blunted', its curved 'hull' appearing like 'the stern of an ancient sunken liner'. There was much scope for focusing on the writer's use of simile and metaphor throughout the passage. Many candidates referred to the 'forest of giant fucus' and the sense of mystery and beauty conveyed by how it 'floated delicately', its fronds appearing as 'exquisite marine wraiths'. The comparison of these and how they 'fluttered' to 'the spirits of a secret neptunian grove' enhanced for some the sense of the supernatural at work or of mysterious and perhaps sinister forces now having dominion.

Most candidates identified in greater or lesser detail the transition Kerans makes from the 'pale light' and 'blue blur' of the upper level to the restricted 'narrow well of light' and the 'dark olive-green water' further

down. As well as a focus on the visual, many scripts commented on the aural imagery and the sounds of the air-pump and of his own breathing. The use of language such as 'drummed', 'boom' and 'thudding like (an) immense tidal pulse' enhances the pressure and discomfort felt by Kerans as well as contributing to the sense of narrative tension and suspense, a significant element of the writing which strong scripts brought out clearly. There is a sense of freedom suggested as well, of course, as the reduced pull of gravity allows for a 'relaxed, graceful moon-stride', although for some candidates this image only underscored the sense of Kerans moving through an other-worldly, alien environment. A number found the image of the sludge rising up from his footprints 'like clouds of disturbed gas' a somewhat sinister one, as if the scientist has entered into a world which is potentially hostile and which certainly resents his presence. Such sensitive close reading was developed in references to the forbidding height of the 'dunes' of silt and how the grilles of the windows were 'locked into them like huge portcullises'. Candidates discerned connotations of entrapment and claustrophobia here, even a macabre suggestion of strangulation in the image of the windows 'choked by debris'. For some, the strangeness of this conjunction of the human world and a post-human one was neatly encapsulated in the image of the 'barnacled lamp-post' against which Kerans steadies himself.

In terms of personal response and interpretation (AO4), there tended to be an interesting variation in emphasis between readings which foregrounded the darkness – literal and metaphorical – of the scene and its suggestions of menace and threat, and those which responded to its surreal beauty and Kerans's apparent fascination, something implied in the detailed closeness of his observations. A number of candidates saw the passage as demonstrating the power of Nature over Man, and the fragile and ultimately temporary nature of human 'civilisation'. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, some read the scenario described as a cautionary tale, placing it in the context of the present day 'Climate Emergency' with rising sea-levels around the globe. In this light, the images of chaos, breakdown and devastation such as the 'fragments of furniture and metal cabinets, sections of floorboards matted together,' were grim portents of the catastrophe which awaits mankind. You have to feel that if Ballard were alive today, he would certainly not disagree.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/05 Coursework</p>

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of the deeper implications of texts
- focus explicitly on a task worded carefully by the teacher
- embed relevant, concise references to support analysis
- analyse in detail and sensitively 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 some 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 (Assessment Objective 3). The most convincing and persuasive responses sustained a critical engagement with writers' effects, relating the points they make to the task. The least effective assignments simply logged devices without exploring specific effects. In these responses, 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 Training Handbook.

There were some less successful responses that showed a detailed knowledge of the text but lacked a clear focus on the task. Some candidates were intent on rehearsing themes they had studied and ended up losing focus on the key words of the task. It is worthwhile repeating the guidance to teachers that they remind candidates of the importance of selecting material in a way that directly addresses the task set; as observed in previous sessions, every sentence should contribute to the relevance of the unfolding argument. This skill will help candidates in their preparation for the examination papers.

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 both good practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

1. 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.
2. 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 level 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.
3. 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 level 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
- include the completed moderation checklist.

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.