

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

For success in this examination, candidates needed to:

- Read the questions carefully and identify what they were being asked to do
- Plan, either mentally or on paper, how they were going to organise their answer
- Provide textual reference in support of the points they were making
- Explore how writers achieve their effects.

They needed to avoid:

- Overlong and elaborate introductions and conclusions
- Introducing unnecessary biographical information about the writer
- Over-elaborate assertions about the effects of punctuation
- Identifying literary features without explaining their effects
- Quotation without comment.

General comments

This was the second March series for this examination, and the second year of the revised specification in which candidates are required to answer one question on poetry and one on a prose text. This revised format seems to suit candidates. There were very few rubric infringements, and nearly all candidates appeared to have divided their time sensibly: there were very few obviously rushed and fragmentary second answers. Having the poems printed on the question paper seems to have improved the extent to which candidates explored the writers' techniques. In the prose section of the paper, the extract question continues to be the preferred option for the majority, but with some texts, the essay alternative was nearly as attractive.

Plenty of scripts bore evidence of planning with an appropriate level of detail. There were a few where planning had been extended into a first draft, subsequently crossed out and replaced by a fair copy. Given the constraints of the examination, this is not the most efficient use of the time available.

Use of text in support of arguments was not consistent. Some candidates provided useful textual detail neatly embedded in their own writing, but there were some who quoted at length, sometimes with no comment of their own, as though merely copying out chunks of the text was sufficient to answer the question. This was sometimes used as part of a narrative response which merely retold the story. A totally narrative response may demonstrate understanding of basic surface meaning, but is unlikely to do more than that, limiting its possible mark to Band 6 at best. However, it was pleasing to note that more candidates are attempting to explore the ways in which writers create effects, and that the incidence of feature-logging which lists literary devices without exploring how they work was reduced. Nevertheless, there was a noticeable tendency, particularly in the poetry section of the paper, for candidates to adopt an explanatory approach which offered a translation of what the candidate thought the poet 'meant', without going on to consider how the writing created this 'meaning'.

One heartening feature of answers this series was how few attempted to answer the general question using only the extract from the alternative question, an issue which has been commented on in previous reports. Another was the fact that there were hardly any examples of candidates attempting extract questions that appeared to be treated as unseen exercises. Virtually all candidates produced work that showed evidence of detailed study.

There was clear evidence on most scripts, at whatever level of achievement, that candidates had derived enjoyment from their study of their set texts. The most popular texts were *Songs of Ourselves Volume 2* and Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems* in Section A, and *Stories of Ourselves*, *The English Teacher* and *I'm the King of the Castle* in Section B.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

How does Hardy so movingly depict the death of an ordinary soldier in *Drummer Hodge*?

Both questions on this text were popular, with this being slightly more so than the alternative. It was often well handled. Candidates identified the rough and ready burial, commenting on the use of the verb 'throw' and the description 'uncoffined'. Many candidates identified the use of Afrikaans terms, although not all went on to consider how this contributed to the sense of alienation. Better candidates took some account of the imagery of stars and constellations, and how the indifference of the universe contributed to making the poem moving. However, a significant number of candidates offered an explanation of the poem without really dealing with the word 'movingly'.

Question 2

Explore the ways in which Hardy makes *The Voice* such a sad poem.

This was not quite as popular as question 1, but was again often handled quite well. Candidates were often well informed about the biographical background, and many probed the language of the poem to good effect, although there were several assertions about alliterative effects which were mutually contradictory and seldom helpful or convincing. More successful candidates often wrote with critical insight about the effect of form and particularly the unconformity of the final stanza, and its contribution to the overall sadness of the poem.

Question 3

Explore the ways in which Heaney vividly conveys his feelings for his father in *Follower*.

Poems Deep and Dangerous was the least popular of the poetry texts, although the two questions were tackled in roughly equal numbers. Responses to Heaney tended to be explanatory, identifying the effect of some of the imagery, for example, without going on to consider how the images conveyed feelings beyond hero-worship. Few candidates explored the force of the final stanza or the role reversal.

Question 4

Explore the ways in which Arnold creates a feeling of great sadness in *To Marguerite*.

The relatively few candidates who tackled this question were generally successful in identifying some of the ways in which Arnold creates feelings of sadness. There was clear evidence that some of the historical and biographical background had been taught, but candidates struck a good balance between using that and exploring the language and imagery of the poem, with particular attention to the ways in which nature is presented.

Question 5

How does Chitre create a moving portrait of his father in *Father Returning Home*?

This was the most popular question on the entire paper. Most candidates were able to find plenty of material to use in shaping their answers, and there were some very full and sensitive responses. However, some candidates limited the scope of their answers while others built fairly elaborate interpretations based on some unsubstantiated assumptions. Among the assumptions were that the father is returning from work. Although it is perhaps a reasonable supposition, the poem doesn't actually state that he has been at work, and some candidates built an elaborate scenario based on the assumption that he has spent his life as a wage slave in order to provide for his ungrateful children. More successful candidates spent more time on

what the poem actually states about his journey. Similarly, the weak tea and stale chapati were seen as evidence that he is systematically neglected by his family. Most candidates saw the centrality of the reference to 'Man's estrangement from a man-made world', and many were able to explore its significance and implications. Very few considered the significance of the final sentence of the poem in relation to the title, or the poet's use of verb tenses. Some candidates took the word 'moving' in the question to mean 'in motion'. This enabled them to say something about his journey, but rather limited the scope of their answers. Few commented on the relationship between the voice of the poem and the subject.

Question 6

In what ways does Herbert vividly portray Love in *Love (III)*?

This was another popular question, often answered at least competently. Most candidates knew some background biographical information about the poet, at least to the extent that he was a priest, and made use of that in producing an interpretation of the presentation of Love in the poem. Many offered a paraphrase of the content as a starting point for their response. More successful answers moved beyond this to relate their paraphrase to the question. A key differentiator was the extent to which candidates looked closely at the language of the poem to deal with the 'vividly' of the question. Candidates were sometimes confused as to who was speaking within the poem, and many focused more on the speaker than on Love, although most equated Love and God.

Section B

Question 7

How does Achebe's writing make this conversation so revealing?

No Longer At Ease was quite popular as a text, and this was marginally the more commonly attempted question on it. However, it was not particularly well handled by many. There seemed to be some uncertainty about the Hon. Sam Okoli's status, and about Obi's relationship to him. Better candidates picked up some of the implications about Obi's attitude to Sam and its dependence on Sam's attitude to Clara, and there was usually some recognition of Sam's equivocal attitude to the British colonial influence on his country, although usually without acknowledgment of the way the country was evolving. In many cases, candidates wrote about perceived themes without much, if any, consideration of the text of the extract. It is worth repeating that it is very difficult to achieve a good mark in an extract-based question without some close consideration of the language used in the extract itself.

Question 8

How does Achebe memorably convey the significance of the Umuofia Progressive Union in this novel?

Although this was also a fairly popular option, it was rarely handled very well, partly because candidates demonstrated a rather uncertain grasp of the nature of the organisation. Generally, there was evidence of some knowledge of what the Union did within the text, but there was often a lack of clarity about specific details, to the extent that it appeared that many candidates thought that Umuofia and Nigeria were one and the same. Very few candidates were able to offer much evaluative comment on the influence of the Union on people from Umuofia, and candidates were often distracted into writing about Obi, with a little reference to the help he received from the UPU in his early days.

Question 9

In what ways does Austen vividly convey Catherine's feelings at this moment in the novel?

Too few responses were seen to offer meaningful comment on candidate performance. Candidates might have dealt with the birth of Catherine's friendship with Miss Tilney, her excitement that the rift caused by John Thorpe's behaviour seems to have been forgotten, her mortification at Eleanor's apparent snub, her distress at Henry's apparent chilliness, and her sense of injustice.

Question 10

How does Austen vividly portray the greed of Isabella and John Thorpe?

Again, too few responses were seen for meaningful comment on candidate performance. Among areas that might have been explored were their interest in money and finding rich spouses, the ways in which financial concerns dominate their responses to people, the superficiality of their interests, the impropriety of their behaviour and their attempts to involve Catherine, and the vulgarity of some of their speech.

Question 11

Explore the ways in which Eliot vividly reveals the characters of Priscilla and Nancy at this moment in the novel.

Unusually, this was less popular than the essay alternative question on this set text. Candidates did not answer this question particularly well, showing a general tendency to over-simplify their responses to 'Priscilla hates men but Nancy is a nice person'. Few really probed Eliot's writing, or explored the differences in idiolect of the two characters. There was also a tendency, in this and the alternative question on this text, for background knowledge and information about the writer's life and times to take up a disproportionate amount of the answer.

Question 12

'The novel shows that good always triumphs over evil.' To what extent does Eliot make you agree with this statement?

As with the alternative extract question, this was not generally well handled. Many candidates took a largely narrative approach, retelling Silas's story with some passing references in certain cases to the stories of the Cass brothers. In a few instances, they went on to assert that this showed that good always triumphs in the end. What was lacking in most responses was any sense of real evaluation and any appreciation of what constitutes 'good'. It was taken to be axiomatic that Silas himself, as the eponymous hero, was therefore 'good'.

Question 13

How does Frayn strikingly convey Stephen's thoughts and feelings to you here?

Too few responses were seen to this question to make meaningful comment on candidate performance. Candidates might usefully have commented on the context and the dramatic first sentence of the extract, the visual comedy of Stephen's surprise and the reference to Mr Gort, his jealousy of the glamour of Keith's parents, his naïve logic and his growing anxiety.

Question 14

What does Frayn's writing make you feel about Keith's father?

Again, too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment on candidate performance. Candidates could usefully have commented on his meticulousness and obsessiveness, the coldness of his relationships with wife and son, the implications of his behaviour towards Keith and Stephen's misinterpretations of his behaviour, and the contrast with Stephen's own father.

Question 15

How does Hill vividly convey Kingshaw's state of mind at this moment in the novel?

This was quite a popular text, and the extract question was preferred by the majority who studied it. It was often competently handled, and most candidates were able to contextualise it successfully. There was a tendency to dwell on the first part of the extract, and to deal with the boy's physical preparations, often with some useful evaluative comment highlighting his youth and naiveté.

Stronger candidates also gave some attention to the later parts of the extract, when Charles's thoughts and reflections are revealed, although for most this was confined to some mention of his thoughts about his mother (which were not always fully understood).

Question 16

What striking impressions does Hill's writing create of Kingshaw's school life?

Although the extract question was much more popular there was a reasonable take-up for this question, which elicited some strong answers. Most candidates found something to say, although there was some confusion, for example discussion involving Fielding as if he was a school friend. There was a lack of detail in many responses, but stronger answers pointed out that school was his only place of safety, and that the decision to move him from his own school to send him to school with Edmund was the key to the final catastrophe. A few went beyond this to point out that not everything about school was perfect, and to consider the 'warts' story and the strange behaviour of Lesage, for instance.

Question 17

Explore the ways in which Narayan's writing makes this such a mysterious moment in the novel.

This was the second most popular text in this part of the paper after *Stories of Ourselves*, and the extract question was a particularly popular option. Some strong answers were seen, which offered close analysis of the writing to illustrate how the sense of mystery is created. The description of the setting received close attention from many, although in a significant number of cases effects were asserted rather than analysed. The mysterious qualities of the message which had led Krishna to the place were acknowledged by many, although a surprising number made no mention of this aspect of the story. There was also evident confusion in some responses over who was doing what, a good deal of what the medium describes to Krishna being ascribed to Krishna himself. This is a very rich passage, and exhaustive coverage was not expected or required, but candidates who gave some close attention to language generally acquitted themselves well.

Question 18

Explore the ways in which Narayan memorably conveys Krishna's attitude towards the teaching at his old college?

This was also quite a popular option which produced an interesting range of responses. Many candidates wrote exclusively about Krishna's own teaching, perhaps overlooking the significance of the definite article in the question. Such an approach was permissible if a little limiting, and candidates were able to say a good deal about Krishna's own attitude as evinced by his lack of preparation and general time-wasting, as well as his comments on his subject matter and his students. Some went on to contrast his subsequent career change, in certain cases relating this to what they perceived to be the themes of the novel. Very few considered what Krishna tells us about his teaching colleagues, and there was in some cases a tendency to oversimplification of an Eastern versus Western education debate. Nevertheless, most responses showed evidence that the text had been both well taught and well learned, and that candidates had derived enjoyment from its study.

Question 19

How does Stevenson vividly convey Mr Utterson's disturbed state of mind at this moment in the novel?

This was generally adequately handled, with candidates able to establish the context quite clearly and to demonstrate understanding of the narrative. Utterson's unease about Jekyll's will, his knowledge of Hyde and his dealings with Lanyon were usually covered. What was frequently lacking was much consideration of the qualities of the writing, in particular of how Stevenson makes us empathise with Utterson. In consequence, some well-informed answers faltered because they didn't offer 'a developed response to the way the writer achieves his effects', to cite one of the Band 3 descriptors in the mark scheme.

Question 20

Does Stevenson make you feel any pity for Dr Jekyll?

The relatively few candidates who chose this option clearly enjoyed the opportunity to argue a case. They were almost equally divided between those who pitied him, and those who argued that he had brought everything on himself and was therefore deserving of no pity. In either direction the argument needed textual support, and this was often in short supply. Some regarded the faithfulness of his friends as a recognition of his good character, rendering him pitiable. Others felt that his over-reaching in setting out to experiment was reprehensible, and caused one thing to lead to another.

Question 21

How does Mistry make this such a powerful moment in the story?

This was the most popular option in the Prose section of the paper, and was often well-handled. Most candidates saw this as a moment of epiphany for the narrator and were able to comment on the description of the sick room, and the appearance of Viraf's father. Many wrote sympathetically about the presentation of Viraf's own distress, and the narrator's empathy with his friend's family, and his recognition of the symbolism of the faded cricket stumps in the final paragraph of the extract. A number of candidates seemed to equate the narrator with Mistry himself, and to interpret the extract as a piece of autobiography. What was lacking in many answers was a close scrutiny of the language of the extract. Nevertheless, the grasp of some of the implications of the extract went some way to compensate for this omission in many cases.

Question 22

How does Thorpe make the ending of *Tyres* so sad?

Few candidates scored highly on this question. In many cases, the response was essentially a narrative run-through of the whole story, with the sadness left as self-evident. Candidates who focused on the end of the story tended to dwell on the effect of the accident on the rest of the narrator's life, without much consideration of Cecile herself or the manner in which the accident is described. The wartime context was sometimes considered, although the unintended consequences of the narrator's actions were seldom highlighted as a contributory factor to the overall effect.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/22

Drama

Key messages

- Successful responses to show awareness of the text as a play on stage. They may consider such features as: the action on stage, stage directions and audience reaction.
- Often questions invite candidates to give their personal response. They need to support their personal response with well-selected and detailed reference to the text.
- When answering passage-based questions, it is often important to place the passage in its context within the play. Candidates need to show how this is relevant to the question. Lengthy retelling of narrative does not gain high marks.
- In more successful answers to passage-based questions, candidates focus firmly on the question, select relevant material from throughout the passage, and respond to the use of language and to the author's craft as a playwright.
- In higher achieving responses to discursive questions, candidates focus firmly on the question, develop their points and use wide-ranging support from the text.
- The best answers consider the author's methods and intentions, and the audience's response.

General comments

Most candidates showed a good knowledge of their set texts, and often revealed enjoyment of the text and engagement with the characters. There were many sound responses to the passage-based questions. Most popular was the passage-based question on Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice*, but candidates also answered on *All My Sons*, *An Inspector Calls* and *Inherit the Wind*. All of these questions required candidates to consider the text on stage. Strong answers thus explored how characters speak and respond to each other in the passage, as well as the actual words they use. Candidates sometimes used the stage directions to help them to address the author's methods and intentions more directly. Briefly placing the passage within the context of the play often helped illustrate part of an answer. For example, referring to the fact that earlier in *The Merchant of Venice* Antonio frequently insults Shylock, shows understanding of why Shylock is keen to get revenge on Antonio in the passage given. Candidates need to guard against lengthy retelling of narrative.

The discursive questions ask about themes or characters in the whole text, so that to do well candidates need a good knowledge of the whole text to enable them to select the most appropriate material for a particular question. There were good answers on *All My Sons*, *An Inspector Calls*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Inherit the Wind*. All of the questions required candidates to consider the text as a play, rather than a prose text, so that references to features of drama helped to answer the question well. For example, when answering on George Deever's contribution to the dramatic impact of *All My Sons*, it was relevant to note that the author creates a dramatic build-up to George's first stage entrance by having George telephone one of the characters on stage to announce his impending visit. The audience realise the importance of this news by the anxiety of the characters on stage, and the dramatic impact is thus increased. When candidates referred to the 'audience' rather than the 'reader' of the play, they were encouraged to view the text as a play on stage, and often went on to make relevant points about staging.

The strongest responses to discursive questions tended to cover five or six relevant points which were well developed and supported with references, quotations and comment. Sometimes candidates made a brief plan before writing, which often helped to keep a focus on the question. Candidates needed to avoid spending too much time on extensive plans, since it limited the time available to write their actual answers.

Similarly, overly-long introductions and conclusions often took time away from the actual answer. This series, several candidates moved away from the question to compare a character in their set text with one in a different text. Thus Milton's *Paradise Lost* and some of John Donne's poetry was mentioned. Candidates sometimes drew quite detailed comparisons between their set texts too. Such comparisons are often helpful to make in class while studying the texts, and candidates are not penalised for making these comparisons in the examination - but they cannot gain marks for them either, since it is not a requirement of the paper. Candidates needed to spend their time focused firmly on the question asked.

Another feature of a successful response was the use of well-selected quotation to illustrate a point. Often the best answers integrated telling phrases from the text. Reasonable answers often contained a quotation followed by comment, sometimes beginning with "This shows that..." and thus candidates showed understanding of the quotation and the point it was supporting. Other candidates tended to write out quotations without comment, so that the examiner was left to try to make the link between the quotation and the point being made. The strongest responses often went on to analyse the language used in the quoted text, and the effect it had.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

When answering this question, it was relevant to place the passage briefly in its context: Chris has just found out the truth about Joe – that he caused the death of young pilots by telling his partner Steve to ship out faulty parts for planes, and then lying that he knew about it, causing Steve to take the blame and go to prison. Chris has just stormed out. This detail provides the context for Kate's warnings to Joe over what he should say to Chris. However, some candidates spent much too long retelling the narrative. Some went on to paraphrase some of the passage without addressing either 'tense' or 'significant'. Stronger answers explored the tension between Kate and Joe as they disagree on what Joe should do. These candidates selected the stage direction to Joe ("struck, amazed") and suggested that it showed the strength of his disbelief that Kate should suggest prison. Most candidates saw significance in Joe's throwaway remark about putting a bullet in his head, and related it to how the play ends. Stronger answers were able to develop this significance further to consider how the remark is used to emphasise the importance of family ties to Joe, and to relate this to Joe's belief that his acts were justified so that he could provide for his family.

Question 2

This was a very popular question. Most candidates commented that it is because of George that the truth about Joe comes out. Some candidates limited themselves to relating George's part in the narrative, while stronger answers considered how George contributes to the drama. These stronger answers often began with the build-up of tension created by the writer with the telephone call announcing George's visit, as all characters on stage show the audience how worried they are. Many answers selected George's strength and determination to take Ann away, and his conflict with Chris. Fewer candidates commented on a more gentle side to George, when he calms down in response to Kate's attempts; a few strong answers commented on how the writer uses this period of calm to provide dramatic contrast with the intensity of George's anger when he discovers Joe's lies about being ill. The focus of the question was on George; lengthy descriptions of relations between Kate and Joe or Chris and Joe were not relevant here.

Question 3

Most answers to this question showed understanding of the differences between Sheila and Mrs Birling as characters, and explained their different roles in the narrative. Candidates needed to show how Priestley conveys their different attitudes to the Inspector by exploring the writing. For instance, Mrs Birling attempts to assert her superiority over the Inspector at first by using an especially polite tone "smiling, social" to welcome him; when this doesn't work, she shows her displeasure "haughtily" and criticises him outright: "That...is a trifle impertinent, Inspector". In contrast, Sheila shows her agreement with the Inspector at the very start of the passage with "Yes. That's true." Stronger answers selected apt material from throughout the passage, while weaker answers started at the beginning and went through the passage, often not getting to the end.

Question 4

Candidates really seemed to enjoy this question. Most candidates had a lot to say about the Inspector, and there is much material to select from. Strong candidates selected several different aspects of the Inspector, developed their comments, and supported them with well-selected quotation or reference to the text. Their

starting point was often Priestley's description of the Inspector as having an air of "massiveness, solidity and purposefulness", which they explored in the way he deals with the Birlings. Weaker candidates often spent too long describing the Birlings' celebration meal at the start, before the Inspector interrupts them. Other aspects of the Inspector often considered were: his possibly supernatural qualities; the way he controls the Birlings; his forthright language and its power, especially in his last speech; and the way he promotes the theme of social responsibility.

Question 5

This was a very popular question. Most candidates commented on Shylock's concern for the loss of his wealth, rather than his daughter, and also on Shylock's happiness at Antonio's loss of his ships, and Shylock's desire for revenge on Antonio. Most candidates quoted from the passage to support Shylock's different emotions. Stronger candidates developed comments to consider how language is used: thus pointing out the use of repetition such as: 'Why there, there, there, there!' and 'What, what, what?' which shows Shylock's distress at the loss of his money and his joy at Antonio's loss. The strongest candidates analysed imagery such as the grimness of the image of Jessica 'hears'd' at Shylock's feet, which suggests the extent of Shylock's miserly attitude to his wealth. The question directly invited candidates to give their personal response: 'What does Shakespeare's writing make you feel...?' Some candidates left their personal response implicit in their evaluation of Shylock as a villain or miser. Stronger candidates either gave their own response directly, as invited to do, or gave an audience's response. Whatever their personal feelings, candidates needed to state what their feelings are, support their comments with detailed reference to the passage, and show understanding of how Shakespeare encourages these feelings by the language he chooses. Stronger candidates often tempered their harsher feelings for Shylock, by considering his sentimental response to the news that Jessica had traded the ring his wife had given him for something of little value: 'a monkey'. The strongest candidates developed this point further, to consider the extent of his hurt – he says he wouldn't have parted with the ring for 'a wilderness of monkeys' which is much more than Jessica traded it for. The use of 'wilderness' suggests both a limitless number, implying the ring was priceless to Shylock, as well as hinting at Shylock's feelings of emptiness without the ring. Some candidates felt quite strongly that Shylock was justified in his desire for revenge on Antonio, because he had been the victim of Antonio's ridicule earlier. This was a relevant reference to an earlier part of the play which helped to put the passage in its context, because it supported their argument that Shylock isn't a complete villain. Lengthier retelling of the plot was not needed. Some candidates commented on the structure of the passage, where Tubal presents Shylock alternately with good and bad news which causes Shylock to move from the extremes of despair at the loss of his money, to joy at Antonio's loss of his ships, and back again. This could be presented in various ways on stage (perhaps humorously, or used to show the build-up of evil intent in Shylock): candidates who considered one or more of its possible effects generally merited marks in the higher bands.

Question 6

Fewer candidates selected this question. Reasonable answers explored memorable aspects of Gratiano and Nerissa's relationship and supported these with detailed reference to the text. Aspects selected included: the speed and surprise of their romance, the contrast in their characters, Nerissa's sharp tongue and the comedy of the plot, with Gratiano not recognising Nerissa, and calling her a 'scrubbed', 'prating' boy. Better answers commented on the humour of this as it appears on stage to an audience. Stronger answers showed an overview of the structure of the play: how Gratiano and Nerissa act as foils for Bassanio and Portia, and are a contrast to Lorenzo and Jessica. Weaker answers to this question tended to narrate with little focus on what the candidate found memorable.

Questions 7 and 8

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 9

Most candidates who answered this question placed it in its context, explaining who Howard was and that the scene took place during the trial. Some narrated the events leading up to the passage in too much detail. Very few candidates noted that this scene opens in the middle of Brady's questioning of Howard and considered the effects of this – the increased drama of the already nervous boy facing the expert. Most candidates selected text from the passage to support explanations of what Brady believes and what Drummond believes. Some of these candidates lost focus on the question and the passage as they provided detailed explanations of creation and evolution. The question encouraged candidates to explore the writing of the passage in more detail. Candidates might have selected for comment Brady's emotive and biased

language such as 'slimy, mess of bugs and serpents' and 'Evil-ution', or his 'monkey' jokes and dramatic gestures. The crowd's loud and dramatic enjoyment of Brady's jokes and questioning could have been considered, along with its effect.

Question 10

This was a popular question. As with all discursive questions, to gain high marks candidates needed to focus on the question, develop points and select relevant material carefully from throughout the text. Most candidates answered the question implicitly, by commenting on the reactions of the townsfolk to each man, their physical appearance, their different interrogation styles during the trial, and their characters. Stronger candidates answered the question more directly by considering the relationship between the two men. The relationship is a powerful part of the play because of the conflict it provides: the two were once friends, but they moved apart; they know each other well and yet are strongly opposed in court; they have respect for each other's skills, but the difference in their beliefs keeps them apart. The authors show the men's concern for each other: Brady laments their separation and Drummond defends Brady from Hornbeck at the end of the play. Some candidates included quotation but with little comment to show how it linked to their points. Often these referred to Drummond's comment on the break-up of their friendship: that Brady has 'moved away – by standing still', or Drummond's defence of Brady's 'right to be wrong'. Stronger candidates indicated how the quotations supported their argument.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32
Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

- Successful responses to show awareness of the text as a play on stage. They may consider such features as: the action on stage, stage directions and audience reaction.
- Often questions invite candidates to give their personal response. They need to support their personal response with well-selected and detailed reference to the text.
- When answering passage-based questions, it is often important to place the passage in its context within the play. Candidates need to show how this is relevant to the question. Lengthy retelling of narrative does not gain high marks.
- In more successful answers to passage-based questions, candidates focus firmly on the question, select relevant material from throughout the passage, and respond to the use of language and to the author's craft as a playwright.
- In higher achieving responses to discursive questions, candidates focus firmly on the question, develop points and use wide-ranging support from the text.
- The best answers consider the author's methods and intentions and the audience's response.

General comments

Most candidates showed a good knowledge of their set texts. Candidates often revealed enjoyment of the text and engagement with the characters. Most candidates answered passage-based questions. By far the most popular was the passage-based question on Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice*, but candidates also answered well on *All My Sons*. All questions required candidates to consider the text on stage. Strong answers thus explored how characters speak and respond to each other in the passage, as well as the actual words they use. Candidates sometimes used the stage directions to help them to address the author's methods and intentions more directly. Briefly placing the passage within the context of the play often helped illustrate part of an answer. For example, referring to the fact that earlier in *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio frequently insults Shylock, shows understanding of why Shylock is keen to get revenge on Antonio in the passage given. Candidates need to guard against lengthy retelling of narrative.

The discursive questions ask about themes or characters in the whole text, so that to do well candidates need a good knowledge of the whole text to enable them to select the most appropriate material for a particular question. All questions required candidates to consider the text as a play, rather than a prose text, so that references to features of drama helped to answer the question well. For example, when addressing the question on the portrayal of Gratiano and Nerissa's love in *The Merchant of Venice*, it helped to consider the humour as it may appear on stage. The audience has seen Nerissa dressed as a boy; this increases their appreciation of Gratiano's mistake when he shows Nerissa – and the audience – that he has not recognised her by describing her as a 'scrubbed' and 'prating' boy. His efforts to be forgiven for giving away Nerissa's ring only get him into more trouble. When candidates referred to the 'audience' rather than the 'reader' of the play, they were encouraged to view the text as a play on stage, and often went on to make relevant points about the staging of the play.

The strongest responses to discursive questions tended to cover five or six relevant points which were well developed and supported with references, quotations and comment. Sometimes candidates made a brief plan before writing, which often helped to keep a focus on the question. Candidates needed to avoid spending too much time on extensive plans, since it limited the time available to write their actual answer.

Similarly, over-long introductions and conclusions often took time away from the actual answer. Candidates needed to spend their time focused firmly on the question asked.

Another feature of a successful response was the use of a well-selected quotation to illustrate a point. Often the best answers integrated telling phrases from the text. Reasonable answers often contained a quotation followed by comment, sometimes beginning with "This shows that..." and thus candidates showed understanding of the quotation and the point it was supporting. Other candidates tended to write out quotations without comment, so that the examiner was left to try to make the link between the quotation and the point being made. The strongest responses often went on to analyse the language used in the quoted text, and the effect it had.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

When answering this question, it was relevant to place the passage briefly in its context: Chris has just found out the truth about Joe – that he caused the death of young pilots by telling his partner Steve to ship out faulty parts for planes, and then lying that he knew about it, causing Steve to take the blame and go to prison. Chris has just stormed out. This detail provides the context for Kate's warnings to Joe over what he should say to Chris. However, some candidates spent much too long retelling the narrative. Some went on to paraphrase some of the passage without addressing either 'tense' or 'significant'. Stronger answers explored the tension between Kate and Joe as they disagree on what Joe should do. These candidates selected the stage direction to Joe ("struck, amazed") and suggested that it showed the strength of his disbelief that Kate should suggest prison. Most candidates saw significance in Joe's throwaway remark about putting a bullet in his head, and related it to how the play ends. Stronger answers were able to develop this significance further to consider how the remark is used to emphasise the importance of family ties to Joe and to relate this to Joe's belief that his acts were justified so that he could provide for his family.

Questions 2 to 4

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 5

This was by far the most popular question. Most candidates commented on Shylock's concern for the loss of his wealth, rather than his daughter, and also on Shylock's happiness at Antonio's loss of his ships, and Shylock's desire for revenge on Antonio. Most candidates quoted from the passage to support Shylock's different emotions. Stronger candidates developed comments to consider how language is used: thus pointing out the use of repetition such as: 'Why there, there, there, there!' and 'What, what, what?' which shows Shylock's distress at the loss of his money and his joy at Antonio's loss. The strongest candidates analysed imagery such as the grimness of the image of Jessica 'hears'd' at Shylock's feet, which suggests the extent of Shylock's miserly attitude to his wealth. The question directly invited candidates to give their personal response: 'What does Shakespeare's writing make you feel...?' Some candidates left their personal response implicit in their evaluation of Shylock as a villain or miser. Stronger candidates either gave their own response directly, as invited to do, or gave an audience's response. Whatever their personal feelings, candidates needed to state what their feelings are, support their comments with detailed reference to the passage, and show understanding of how Shakespeare encourages these feelings by the language he chooses. Stronger candidates often tempered their harsher feelings for Shylock, by considering his sentimental response to the news that Jessica had traded the ring his wife had given him for something of little value: 'a monkey'. The strongest candidates developed this point further, to consider the extent of his hurt – he says he wouldn't have parted with the ring for 'a wilderness of monkeys' which is much more than Jessica traded it for. The use of 'wilderness' suggests both a limitless number, implying the ring was priceless to Shylock, as well as hinting at Shylock's feelings of emptiness without the ring. Some candidates felt quite strongly that Shylock was justified in his desire for revenge on Antonio, because he had been the victim of Antonio's ridicule earlier. This was a relevant reference to an earlier part of the play which helped to put the passage in its context, because it supported their argument that Shylock isn't a complete villain. Lengthier retelling of the plot was not needed. Some candidates commented on the structure of the passage, where Tubal presents Shylock alternately with good and bad news which causes Shylock to move from the extremes of despair at the loss of his money, to joy at Antonio's loss of his ships, and back again. This could be presented in various ways on stage (perhaps humorously, or used to show the build-up of evil intent in Shylock): candidates who considered one or more of its possible effects gained marks.

Question 6

Fewer candidates selected this question. Reasonable answers explored memorable aspects of Gratiano and Nerissa's relationship and supported these with detailed reference to the text. Aspects selected included: the speed and surprise of their romance, the contrast in their characters, Nerissa's sharp tongue and the comedy of the plot, with Gratiano not recognising Nerissa, and calling her a 'scrubbed', 'prating' boy. Better answers commented on the humour of this as it appears on stage to an audience. Stronger answers showed an overview of the structure of the play: how Gratiano and Nerissa act as foils for Bassanio and Portia, and are a contrast to Lorenzo and Jessica. Weaker answers to this question tended to narrate with little focus on what the candidate found memorable.

Questions 7 to 10

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42

Unseen

Key messages

- The strongest responses demonstrated an overall understanding of the tone and mood created by the writing.
- All four Assessment Objectives for English Literature are tested in this paper. Knowledge and narrative understanding need to be supplemented by awareness of implied meaning and exploration of the effects of language for higher marks.
- Quotation technique was usually strong, but quotation needs to be followed by comment on language.
- The best answers combine detailed comment on the effects of language choices with sensitive personal response to implied meaning, tone and mood.
- Interpretation of poetry and prose should begin by asking what effects the writer wanted to achieve.

General comments

Once again there was plenty of strong work in response to the unseen questions in this session. Candidates were well-prepared, made plenty of references to the texts in their responses, and were able to identify a wide range of literary devices. The mood of each of these texts is unsettling, with plenty implied or left unsaid. This left some room for different interpretations among those candidates bold enough to advance an individual response. Not all were confident in doing this; better marks were achieved by candidates who had a clear overview of the whole text, and something to say about the effects the writer wishes to create, from the beginning of their response. A number preferred to work their way through the texts chronologically before committing to a firm opinion about them or directly answering the question. This led to a lot of thorough answers which lacked the critical insight required for the highest two bands. A small number of weaker candidates fell back on paraphrase of the narrative, or the candidate's version of it, with either quotations or unacknowledged textual lifts. It is important for candidates to remember that this paper tests literary criticism: candidates are rewarded for engaging critically with the effects and impact of texts, even if an examiner disagrees with that reading, as long as the critical evaluation is supported by comments on details of the text.

Comments on the structure of the poem were very common, but they tended to come towards the end of an essay. It might be better to suggest that candidates explore larger structures first. For writers, the choice of verse form or narrative perspective comes very early in the creative process, and a good critical response might wish to address that. Relatively few answers to the prose question considered the voice and viewpoint of the narrator, and what it implies about emotions and attitudes. An overview of the writer's choices, considering form, overall structure, the attitude towards the subject and the mood and tone created by those choices, makes a powerful start to an essay. Strong opening paragraphs, showing the ability to tackle underlying meaning, tended to distinguish the strongest responses. There is plenty of scope later in the essay to analyse the more descriptive passages in depth and detail.

Most candidates understood the importance of AO3, the appreciation of ways in which writers use language and form to create meaning. Most used a range of extensive and brief quotations embedded within the text, and many used those opportunities to analyse the ways in which language choices reveal underlying attitudes, from the grandmother's materials, to the discomfort the actors feel about being in the 'wrong' part of town. Hence deeper awareness of underlying ideas and attitudes emerged from patient attention to detail. Less strong responses tended to use quotation as a form of paraphrase and had little to say about the choice of words, missing the opportunity to comment on implied meaning.

Understanding of implied meaning is crucial for AO2, and often depended on the ability of candidates to sustain their reading of the texts, and to explore each section. Highly rewarded answers began with an appreciation that 'My Grandmother' is an unusual elegy, or saw that the superficial relief of the actors at the end of the prose passage is a cover for a deeper sense of unease that they are in the wrong part of town,

among people who don't really want them to be there. Less confident candidates would be well-advised to divide the text into sections before writing, and to show understanding of the whole sequence of details within their chosen text.

AO4, personal response, is the hardest assessment objective to define, but it certainly goes beyond surface knowledge (AO1) and the ability to see clearly what is described to us. It is a response to the overall mood of the writing, and how that affects the reader's reaction to the descriptions. What do we feel about the grandmother's life and what it meant to the speaker? Why do we think the actors felt so uneasy, and do we sympathise with them or not? What might be the wider points the writers are making about family relationships and social divisions? Do we agree with them?

The strongest answers had something to say. Candidates were advancing an argument through their responses and had an appreciation of what the writer wanted to achieve. Good answers showed willingness to be surprised by the stark absence of grief in the poem, or the detachment of the actors from their surroundings (and potentially their audience). Writers use narrative and description to explore attitudes and states of mind, and we need to think about whether we share that viewpoint or want to view it more critically. A critical reading shows awareness of ways in which writers may be manipulating our emotions, and challenges as well as appreciates the viewpoint of the writer.

Many of the scripts showed evidence of careful planning, and candidates also have plenty of time to annotate the question paper itself. It is not necessary to write an extensive draft, but some shaping of argument and careful sequencing of examples will help to present a coherent and consistent response. Most candidates wrote an introduction. There were a few 'courtesy introductions', which simply reworded the question and bullet point, or wrote at length about the choice of pronoun in the title. Many realised that the introduction to an essay has to state an argument or point of view, to be supported by analysis of evidence, so the best introductions began to argue for an interpretation from the beginning. Most went on to look in detail at the choice of individual words and images, and at least attempted an analytical approach. Rarer, and consequently more impressive, answers showed powers of synthesis and evaluation, drawing conclusions from the evidence about the attitudes of characters, and making a personal response to their relationships, or underlying emotions. These appreciated that some of what is conveyed in a text is hinted at, rather than explicit, and needs to be teased out by exploring the implications behind the choices of language and detail.

The passages are not chosen to trick readers, but they are selected for their depth of possible implications, and attempts to explore these, even if awkwardly expressed, will be highly rewarded, as long as the interpretation is supported by a valid comment on a textual detail quoted in the candidate's script. Mid-range answers tend to list and identify what is striking about the writing without explicitly linking this to the meaning of the passage as a whole, and without considering the writer's purpose. There was however a very pleasing quantity of considered, evaluative and individual responses, sensitive to detail and with convincing insights into their effect.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem, *My Grandmother* by Elizabeth Jennings, proved overwhelmingly popular in this session. It provoked a variety of responses. Some found it hard to believe that the poet could be writing about someone with whom she felt no connection, and wanted to sentimentalise the poem, seeing the description of the antiques in the grandmother's shop as, like her, old but valuable. While this showed response to the imagery of the poem, it was surely a misreading of tone and mood, and of the poem's deeper implications. Others, more wisely, began by making sure they understood the final stanza, which asserts very starkly that the poet 'felt no grief at all' at her grandmother's death but reiterates her 'guilt' at having once refused 'to go out with her'. These candidates ensured their answers were focussed and appreciated what is striking about this elegy by concentrating on the emotion of guilt rather than grief, and understanding the solitary and self-sufficient nature of the grandmother. For the child, the paraphernalia of the antique shop, later transferred to the grandmother's own room, were an indication of her materialism and preoccupation with surfaces, and implicitly of her inability to connect with people.

Many candidates noticed the poet's choice of form, and some strong answers maintained that it reflected the formality and impersonality of the grandmother. Few commented in detail on the effects of form and structure, although the chronology of the poem was usually understood. The pattern of alternating rhymes, or half-rhymes, seems to enact distance and awkwardness, as if mirroring the responses of poet and

grandmother to one another. The couplets at the end of each stanza are quite devastating, and add to the poem's sombre mood. Their uncompromising finality seems to echo the unmourned death of the old lady. Each is epigrammatic and grim in its implications.

In the first stanza, many candidates wondered in what sense the antique shop 'kept her'. Was she poor or widowed? Stronger answers found evidence for their view that it had somehow replaced human relationships, and that the shop kept her emotionally withdrawn and unable to move beyond a world of old things. Several noticed the materialism and perhaps the superficiality of her preoccupations. The antiques are catalogued by the writer, as they might have been by the grandmother, while the adjectives 'faded' and 'heavy' connote an old and sombre environment unlikely to be appealing to a young girl. Many felt there was something sad or even unpleasant about the way the grandmother 'watched her own reflection', depending on whether what she saw was her own age, her loneliness or her self-absorbed sufficiency. Those who thought her obsessive or even selfish found support by referring to the slightly sinister sibilance surrounding the 'salvers and silver bowls' and 'polish'. Her preoccupation with shiny surfaces and material value seemed a substitute for love. The final couplet clinches these ideas by suggesting that she wanted to prove there was 'no need of love': she seems to have replaced warmth and relationship with shiny possessions and material object. As one candidate put it, 'she is portrayed as someone living in an artificial world'. The poet's memories of her grandmother are all memories of objects, as if she existed only through her possessions and not as a person.

Those who could hear the poet's unease in her descriptions of the shop could better understand the reasons for the girl's refusal to go out with her, and appreciate that she might have found both the grandmother and her interest in objects creepy. Those sensitive to the nature of childhood fears and guilt wrote well about this stanza. Many noticed that the grandmother 'never said' that she was hurt, showing the lack of communication between them. The awkward half-rhyme of the final couplet could be the poet's own embarrassment and sensitivity, rather than knowledge that she had really hurt the grandmother. After all, she was 'guessing'. Certainly there is evidence that the poet felt marginalised by her grandmother's preoccupation with beautiful things and felt that 'like antique objects', she would be used, evaluated and catalogued, ready to be sold on. The strongest answers were those which really worked at the implications of this significant simile.

Many candidate wrote feelingly about the way the grandmother's life has shrunk, in the third stanza, to the dimensions of 'one long narrow room', and thought this was a realistic portrait of old age. They noted her fragility and wish to be surrounded by 'her best things'. Several wrote about the way the sense of smell is invoked to suggest the mustiness of the room, over-stuffed with things that can't be used. They were surely right to suggest that the onlooker feels uncomfortable in the room. It was a characteristic of the strongest responses that they explored the deeper implications of the shadows and 'absences' of that room. What was lacking in the grandmother's life? What had been 'too long kept shut'? Several suggested that the antiques had become a substitute for lost love, or a barrier to a more direct kind of communication. Some thought the grandmother was too old to do the polishing. Others read the shiny surfaces more metaphorically, and found it haunting or sad that the grandmother can no longer see 'her own reflection'. Did her vanity, or her materialism, result in the absence of love? Several noted that the proud self-sufficiency of the first stanza has turned into a more mournful loneliness and awareness of what is missing. One candidate suggested that in losing her shop, the grandmother had lost her identity and that she had no personal relationship which could make up for that.

When the poet returns to the grandmother's room, she observes the 'tall' and heavy furniture, as physical presences in the room which highlight the old lady's absence. Only the 'guilt' remains, reiterated for emphasis after the stark monosyllables of the first line. She needed the 'things', when she didn't seem to need people. Good responses explored the final couplet in some depth. The absence of finger-marks could reflect the grandmother's own absence – but then she would have polished them away. It seems to suggest that her desire for polished surfaces has eradicated all human traces, just as her self-sufficiency made it impossible for the poet to connect, communicate or grieve. However, the last image of the 'new dust falling' has all kinds of implications, the biblical language suggesting that the grandmother has returned to the dust – the humanity? – she tried so hard to keep off, and the image a reminder that she is still hauntingly present on the surface of her favourite objects, if only by her absence. In a similar way, the 'dust' of recollection and guilt still haunt the poet in a very striking way.

Question 2

The extract from Nadine Gordimer's short story *The Amateurs* does not depend on its location in apartheid South Africa for its uneasy tone. The actors feel out-of-place and the atmosphere feels tense because they are out of their 'comfort zone', in a place which is obviously poor, potentially dangerous and implicitly

resentful. They treat the people they meet as 'audiences', as we are told in the penultimate sentence. Their – professional or amateur – detachment is a form of protection, which prevents genuine emotions from being engaged. Stronger answers certainly noted that the passage is largely made up of dialogue, and passages of description. We learn little here about the actors themselves. The writer seems to share their viewpoint, but may be treating them ironically, or with the same detachment that they use towards others.

Many candidates wisely took their cue from the question's suggestions of 'tension and unease' and were able to apply these terms structurally to the whole extract, seeing tension in the uncertainty that the actors will find their destination, and unease even in their humour. The tension increases as they encounter the 'thin local' and is only partly relieved by the arrival of the 'fat police-boy'. His appearance makes him comical, as he wobbles on his bicycle, and he is clearly socially inferior to the actors, although they are happy to be 'taken over by officialdom'. They are still 'stared at' and someone laughs – at them? – from the street by the Beer Hall. The unease comes partly from the 'thin local' but also from the darkness, decay and emptiness of the streets. The lack of people is eerie, although the actors seem very conscious that 'life' is only a street away. They don't seem to be very welcome, and the men and girls who observe their arrival at the Hall do so impassively 'with arms crossed and 'the intensity of a stub-smoker'. They don't look like an expectant audience. The people, significantly, seem 'more part of the dark than the light', and the light only exposes the dust in the air. However, the tension is released for the actors because they have arrived at their place of performance. For them, it is just a 'story to tell'. Their exclamations provide a slightly hysterical – and perhaps temporary – lifting of the sense of unease and faint menace.

The bullet points encouraged candidates to analyse the creation of tension by looking at the actors' problems in finding the venue and the effects of their encounter with the 'local' and the policeman. Throughout the story there is a sense of danger. The venue is 'humpy in the dark', the troupe 'stumbles', and they run back and shut the car doors and windows when the native tries to help them. The poverty of the town is conveyed by the description of narrow, dark and rutted streets. The policeman has a weapon, 'roars' and 'swoops' and makes the native shrink away. Some stronger candidates were able to perceive in the policeman's repeated 'sir' and his being referred to as a police 'boy' that he is considered inferior to the actors, who speak to him 'impatiently'. The third bullet point invited candidates to say how the writing conveys the actors' impressions of the town and its people. This proved the most demanding, as many answers were very narrative in approach and did not analyse the details of tensions caused by the difference between the actors and the townspeople. The actors fear someone who may be just trying to help: is he as suspicious of them, and their motives, as they are of his 'hands deep in his pockets'? They are 'stared at and saluted', notice the evident poverty of the town and rather patronisingly regard the whole enterprise as a bit of a lark or a 'pleasant little adventure of being lost'. The whole passage suggests a lack of connection between the actors and their audiences, described as existing in 'multifarious separateness', itself almost a metaphor for social, and racial, division.

At a basic level, examiners found candidates showed understanding of the narrative but also a tendency to paraphrase. Candidates did begin to appreciate ways in which there is a sense of the actors being 'lost'. This was sometimes through response to the narrative, rather than to the writing itself, but among stronger scripts there was understanding of the ways in which the encounters with the native and the policeman convey that the place may be dangerous or perceived as such. They began to see ways in which the actors are in an alien environment.

Middle-range responses directly addressed the stem question. There was some understanding of how the writing creates a sense of unease and potential danger at the outset and, in stronger responses, throughout the passage. There was reasonable understanding of the significance of the actors' reaction to the native and the policeman, with support from the text. At this level, there was more engagement with the ways in which the writing conveys the differences between the actors and the community, such as their reaction to the offer of help from the 'thin local', or their being taken over by officialdom. Some analysed how the description of the policeman conveys tension and underlying violence, noting the way he roars and the swing of his 'knobkerrie' from his belt. Candidates selected details to show the 'darkness' and poverty of the area, and the locals' reactions to the acting troupe. However, comment on the details of language was not especially developed or explicit at this level, with quotation largely used for illustration and support of points. Some commented on language such as the ambiguity of the policeman's 'Are you having any trouble?' Candidates in this mark range began to make judgements of their own about the way people behave, from actors, locals and policeman, to the bystanders at the end of the passage.

Stronger responses showed clear understanding of the creation of tension and unease. There was clear and explicit exploration of the ways in which the chosen words and techniques create tension in the description of the actors' maze-like journey to a venue in a place they do not understand. The language of the dialogue of actors and strangers, and the implications of the descriptive passages were explored in detail. Some noticed

how the language conveys awkwardness in communication, or a sense of panic in the short, monosyllabic sentences. Some formed judgments of their own about the uneasy relationship between the actors and the environment, and evaluated the ambiguity of the native looking at them 'suspiciously', and his shrinking from the policeman, with some insight into how the poverty of the area is conveyed by the description of the streets and the houses, the contrast between darkness and light, and the 'dusty red-wash' of the atmosphere.

The strongest scripts demonstrated candidates' own ideas about the way the actors' impressions of the town and its people are conveyed, and how this presents the difference and tension between the two parties. The very best candidates were able to communicate their own ideas about the patronising attitudes of the actors and the ambiguity of their 'solidarity before the multifarious separateness' of the audience. A handful appreciated the implicit criticism in the phrase: '...although they might want to see the location, the location did not want to see them'. One or two sensed that the acting troupe were 'lost' in a more metaphorical sense, and too self-absorbed to be truly sensitive to the atmosphere which their presence – 'out of place' - had created.