

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/02
Drama

Key messages

- The strongest answers to this paper show an awareness that the text was written to be acted on stage. These answers make a response to features of drama such as stage directions, entrances/exits, action, dialogue and audience reaction.
- Answers to the passage-based questions need to analyse the writing of the passage to show how the playwright conveys an understanding of the narrative and characters to the audience.
- Answers to discursive questions need to develop an argument in answer to the question, to include a personal response, and to support the answer with quotations or well-selected references to the text.

General comments

The most popular text this series was *A Raisin in the Sun*, with some responses also to *Macbeth*. There were too few answers on *A View from the Bridge* for comment. Candidates usually knew their text well, showed a genuine engagement with it and often gave a detailed personal response to characters and situations, for example to Walter's devastation at being tricked out of his father's life insurance money in **Question 1** on *A Raisin in the Sun*. Candidates often needed to analyse the writing in more detail to consider how the playwright encouraged their personal response.

Most candidates followed the rubric of the paper and answered one question. Answers tended to be quite short. It is difficult for a candidate to make a reasonably developed response to a question, with textual support and detailed analysis, in around one side of writing. When answering on the passage-based question, candidates needed to consider the whole of the passage, rather than just the first half.

Candidates who answered the discursive questions needed to make sure they addressed the question throughout their answer, using carefully selected material from the text in support. Candidates needed to know the text well in order to select the best material as support for their answer to a specific question. The strongest candidates were able to analyse the text they quoted to show clearly how it supported their argument, whereas weaker answers often referred to the text without comment, leaving the Examiner to work out its link with the question. Some candidates made assertions which were not backed up by textual support.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

This was the most popular question. All candidates understood the enormity of the situation facing Walter in the passage, as he realises his so-called 'friend', Willy, has tricked him out of the life insurance money paid to Mama on the death of her husband; money which Mama had eventually agreed to trust to Walter as the new head of the family to fund his business venture of buying a liquor store. Often candidates explored the context of Walter's misjudgement in more detail to consider the consequences not only for Walter and his liquor store, but also for his family: Mama's disappointment in Walter, Beneatha's education and future, and Ruth's hopes for better living conditions for the growing family. Weaker answers spent too long explaining these consequences instead of addressing how Hansberry makes the passage such a powerful moment in the play. Most candidates focused their answer on Walter. Thus they commented on the powerful emotions

felt by Walter as he realises the money is gone. More developed answers linked their comments closely to Hansberry's writing. Thus they selected parts of the passage such as Walter's fear of what has happened, shown in Hansberry's stage directions when Walter is described as "screaming" at Bobo; or Walter's confusion as he asks where Willy was, shown in Hansberry's writing by Walter's stuttering: "Why...where was he...where is he?". Candidates who continued to the end of the passage found much to analyse in Walter's last speech. Thus they identified Walter's extreme emotion, shown as he begs Willy "...don't do it...Please don't do it" and appeals to God for help. Stronger answers selected Walter's comment: "I put my life in your hands" to show how Hansberry conveys the importance of the money to Walter; it represents his "life", with the implication that now it is gone, his future is now "dead". Many candidates quoted Walter's heightened language in his shouting: "THAT MONEY IS MADE OUT OF MY FATHER'S FLESH—". Most candidates explained this line to show understanding that the money was paid as life insurance on Walter's father's death. Stronger candidates moved beyond an explanation to analyse Hansberry's writing. Thus they commented that the capitals showed Walter was shouting and very emotional, and often they developed this to make the link from the alliterative and emotional "father's flesh" to the life insurance necessitating death before it was paid. The idea of the money being literally "made out of" Walter's father's flesh intensifies the value to Walter and the enormity of its loss.

The most confident answers also made a response to features of the drama of the passage. There is much to select from, with most candidates focusing on Walter. Thus they considered Walter's movement around the stage, described in Hansberry's stage directions. His desperation to find a different explanation for the missing money is shown as he whirls around appealing in vain to Ruth, to Bobo, to himself, to Willy and finally to God. Candidates showed an awareness of the play on stage in material selected from Walter's final speech in the passage. How Walter speaks was analysed. He uses broken language which reflects how he himself is a broken man with the realisation of the loss of the money. Hansberry was considered to powerfully convey this collapse visually to the audience by having Walter "crumple down on the floor". The entrance of Mama and Beneatha at this very moment powerfully signifies Walter's realisation of the consequences of the loss of the money for them. Hansberry creates a powerful visual and audible display for the audience of Walter's extreme anger and grief as he "starts to pound the floor with his fists, sobbing wildly". Bobo's apologetic exit at this moment underlines their helplessness.

Question 2

This question was not as popular as **Question 1**, and on the whole was not as successfully answered. The reason for this was the lack of supporting detail from the play. Candidates needed to know the play well to select a range of suitable material. Less confident candidates often confined their answers to a description of the limited facilities of the apartment (such as the shared bathroom, the two bedrooms and the small kitchen) and went on to explain in general terms why the apartment was too small for the Younger family. Stronger answers explicitly addressed the question to consider how Hansberry makes the apartment such an important part of the play. Thus they considered the family's attitudes to the apartment and how Hansberry uses this. They identified Mama's nostalgic feelings for it: she and her husband, Big Walter, selected all the furnishings with "care and love and even hope" for their life together. They recognised its limited space and situation even then, because they never intended living there for more than a year. Candidates commented on the difference of the apartment now, as a "beat-up hole" with "tired" furnishings, Travis sleeping in the living room, and the everyday problems of sharing a bathroom with their neighbours, the Johnsons. Perceptive candidates showed understanding of how Hansberry uses this contrast to show that the dreams of Mama and Big Walter to provide an attractive home and hope for their family were destroyed by the realities of life as a poor black family in 1960s Chicago, with low wages and limited opportunities. Ruth's pregnancy highlights the lack of space and puts the focus on how the money from the insurance check is to be used. Hansberry uses Mama's decision to buy the new house and leave the apartment to symbolise her dream of providing a better life and future for her family. Travis's gift for her of the gardener's hat is a touching symbol of a better, future life in a house with outside space for a garden.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Questions 3 and 4

There were too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 5

Candidates were able to place this passage in its context; it comes immediately after Macbeth has resolved to kill Duncan, and there is evidence of this in the passage. Most candidates commented on the setting and the atmosphere at the start of the passage, with the dark, moonless night and that most people are fast asleep. That Banquo is awake shows that he feels something is wrong: he says *“And yet I would not sleep”*, refers to *“cursed thoughts”* keeping him awake, and tells Macbeth that he’s been dreaming of the Weird Sisters. All these are disturbing to an audience. Some candidates then pointed out that where Macbeth seems to test Banquo’s loyalty to the King, with *“If you shall cleave to my consent”*, the fact that Banquo remains true to Duncan emphasises the wickedness of Macbeth by contrast. In the same way, Banquo’s reports of Duncan’s gratitude to Lord and Lady Macbeth for their hospitality, expressed by the gift of a diamond to Lady Macbeth and *“great largess”* sent to the servants’ quarters, also emphasises how disturbing it is that Macbeth is planning to murder such a good and kind friend. Most candidates focused on Macbeth’s speech at the end of the passage. They suggested that it is disturbing for Macbeth to imagine a dagger that looks so real, but that it is a symbol of the stress he is under to perform such a wicked murder. That Macbeth himself suggests the vision of the dagger is a product of his *“heat-oppressed brain”* seems to confirm the strain he is under to do the evil act of murder. Stronger candidates considered the text as a play intended to be acted on stage. They referred to these lines when Macbeth addresses the dagger:

*“Come, let me clutch thee.—
I have thee not – and yet I see thee still!”*

Candidates considered that the actor on stage would be grabbing at thin air here, dramatically showing the audience that there is nothing physically there, only the murder which he is planning in his mind. They considered that this was disturbing because the audience can see how Macbeth is being drawn towards committing the crime by his own evil thoughts, which materialise in the vision of the dagger as he says to it: *“Thou marshall’st me the way that I was going”*. Less confident candidates limited their comments on the passage to the dark night and to the imaginary dagger, but often they did not refer to the text in support, nor develop their comments to show a full understanding of why these were so disturbing.

Question 6

Generally candidates who answered this question knew the play well and picked out the main features of Macduff’s role. Thus, they thought worthy of mention that he discovers Duncan’s murder; that he is too suspicious of Macbeth to go to his coronation, so he travels to England instead; his family are murdered on Macbeth’s orders in vengeance; and so Macduff returns to hunt out Macbeth and kills him in single combat. Good answers moved beyond this narrative approach and explored the significance of these actions to the play, using material from the play in support. Candidates considered Macduff’s character as being significant. He is addressed as “Dear Duff” by his peers and held in high esteem. He is a loyal and brave warrior. Thus when he has suspicions of Macbeth’s involvement in Duncan’s murder, he is someone important enough for Macbeth to have to deal with. Shakespeare uses this opportunity to show the increase in Macbeth’s wickedness: in revenge, he orders the murder of Macduff’s family, dismissing the evil act quickly: *“be it thought and done”*. Realising Macduff is still alive, Macbeth out of bravado says *“Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?”*. This raises the audience’s suspicions. Macbeth has been told by the witches that he cannot be killed by any man *“born of woman”*, so he feels indestructible. Most candidates pointed out the significance at the end of the play of the warrior Macduff fighting Macbeth: that he was not *“born of woman”* but was *“from his mother’s womb / untimely ripped”*. As a warrior he is well-matched to fight Macbeth, and once Macbeth discovers his mistake in believing in his own invincibility, he is beaten and killed by Macduff. Thus the significance of Macduff is his role as the honourable warrior who brings retribution to Macbeth. The deaths of his family provide the motivation for Macduff to return from England to hunt Macbeth down and kill him. Stronger answers used close reference to the text to move beyond the narrative to explore the significance of the plot structure, for instance on the predictions of the witches.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/03
Coursework

Key messages

1. Teachers should check the tasks they set against the examples of effective tasks given in the *Coursework Training Handbook*.
2. Teachers should annotate each assignment carefully in order to provide justification for the award of a particular mark.
3. Where there is more than one teacher in a Centre, there should be evidence of internal moderation with explanations provided for any adjustments made to marks.
4. Teachers should check the completeness and accuracy of all paperwork before they submit it to Cambridge for external moderation.
5. Planning and the writing of first drafts should be completed under direct teacher supervision so that the Centre can vouch for the authenticity of candidates' own work.

General comments

In addition to this report, Centres will receive individual reports on their internal moderation of candidate work. This general report draws together the main points contained within the Centre reports. The component had fewer entries in November than in June 2016; Centres new to the syllabus should refer to the June 2016 report for the more detailed guidance contained therein.

Most of the tasks set allowed candidates to meet the relevant band descriptors. However, there was some evidence of tasks that did not target the descriptors in the higher bands. For candidates to reach the higher bands in Critical Essay assignments, tasks should be set that enable focus on writers' use of language, structure and form. Examples of appropriate tasks can be found in both the *Coursework Training Handbook* and in the general essay questions set in 0486 Set Texts examination papers. Tasks which omit any mention of the writer lead candidates to write about characters as real-life people rather than fictional creations and provide no direction to explore the qualities of the writing; this approach is unlikely to meet the higher band descriptors and should be avoided through the careful wording of set tasks.

Centres should not submit work if they are aware that it contains plagiarism. To avoid occurrences of plagiarism, teachers must be rigorous in their supervision of the stages of planning and writing of first drafts. This will enable them to vouch for the authenticity of candidate's work. Moderators are required to send all cases of suspected malpractice to Cambridge International Examinations' Compliance Department for further investigation.

Effective moderation of written assignments relies on effective annotation of candidate work by teachers. Summative comments which draw on the wording of the descriptors and focused ticking of valid and thoughtful points together offer the Moderator a rationale for the award of a particular mark. It follows that clean copies of assignments (i.e. those devoid of teacher annotation) are of limited use to the moderation process.

A staple or treasury tag properly applied can readily secure a candidate's two written pieces and the individual record card in a way that provides ease of access to the Moderator. Plastic covers and card files are not helpful in this regard. Further guidance on appropriate administration and the submission of coursework samples can be found in the *Teacher Guide*.

Finally, the majority of Centres are to be congratulated on the robustness of their administration, as they recognise the central importance to their candidates of the proper completion of forms and the careful transcription of marks from assignments to record cards and mark sheets. Where there are serious deficiencies and/or lack of rigour in a coursework submission, the Centre may be asked to follow one of the other two optional routes through the syllabus, which are 100 per cent externally assessed.