

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 2010/12 Paper 12 Poetry and Prose</p>
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Key messages

In order to do well in this subject, candidates should be discouraged from:

- giving unneeded extraneous biographical information
- commenting on how the use of punctuation exclusively adds to the mood and tone of a poem
- describing rhyme schemes and verse forms without showing their function
- answering the general essay question on a text solely by reference to the extract
- treating a poem or passage as an Unseen exercise.

Success will come from:

- a relevant, individual and carefully argued response to the question
- focusing on the key words in the question
- detailed knowledge of the text supporting the points made
- careful commentary on the writer's choice of words and on the effects created.

General comments

This session showed a wide range of achievement with many excellent responses which were focused, directed, and supported with aptly-chosen quotations that were neatly embedded in the argument. There were answers which were strong enough to be credited the maximum mark of 50. There were also some weak and shorter responses which showed little knowledge or understanding and which barely referred to the questions set. Occasionally answers to passage-based questions gave very little indication that the context was known or that the situation presented in the passage was clearly understood. It should be noted that the words 'at this moment in the novel' presented in passage-based questions should be read as an indicator to candidates that it would be helpful to consider the wider context of the text, if only briefly. Clearly the significance of an incident presented in the passage or the reasons why it is memorable or powerful cannot be fully appreciated without a wider awareness of how the specific passage fits in with the rest of the text.

Most candidates demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of their texts and were able to direct their answers to the specific terms of the question. However, there were many answers which were written using general unsupported assertions, and featured uninformed responses such as 'it helps the reader to empathise' or 'it makes the poem flow more smoothly'. Some candidates provided unnecessary and sometimes inaccurate biographical detail, particularly in relation to *The Trees are Down* and *To Heidi With Blue Hair*. It cannot be emphasised enough that it is essential to answer the question set and that candidates should not merely write down everything they know about a particular piece. Candidates should use the question to 'frame' their answer, and then occasionally re-focus during their response using the key words of the question. This approach provides a sensible if basic strategy to keep answers focused and help candidates in making sure they do not become distracted by irrelevant details.

In previous reports, we have made the point that it is worth spending five minutes on underlining the key words and creating a brief plan relating to them before beginning writing and it was good to see that in many cases this advice had been noted and acted upon. Some candidates limited themselves by offering a narrow

range of material which they repeated during their response. The intensifiers in the question, the words such as 'vividly', 'dramatically' and 'memorably', are still being neglected. In weaker answers points were often left un-argued, or quotations were offered without any indication of what the quotation was intended to illustrate. Quotations also sometimes cut off key words, thus distorting the poet's meaning and demonstrating that the candidate did not have a strong understanding of meaning.

It is important to comment on the writer's use of language or technique, but this must be linked to the effect this has on meaning or on the reader, as well as being directly relevant to the question being answered. Some candidates concentrated on using technical language but without actually exploring the effect of techniques. Although knowing terms such as enjambment or caesura is useful and lends sophistication to answers, candidates should support this with a clear explanation of what this means, such as slowing down or increasing the pace and comment on the effect this has.. Simply pinpointing that a certain part of the poem is an example of caesura and then continuing to make another point does not fulfil the criteria for Assessment Objective 3, which requires candidates to appreciate the 'ways' that writers shape 'meanings and effects'.

Candidates are discouraged from using long quotations or listing key words and labelling them as a 'semantic field' without any comment on their effect or meaning, as this does not constitute analysis. Recognition of literary devices such as similes and alliteration does not by itself constitute analysis either. Likewise, describing rhyme schemes and verse forms is rarely particularly relevant. Candidates should be informed that simply describing the language using phrases such as 'positive' or 'negative connotations' without any further elaboration does not contribute to an argument. .

Though not as significant a number of candidates as in the previous sessions, there were still occasional examples of essay questions being answered by candidates using exclusively the material in the printed passage. Candidates must remember that there is a choice of questions on each text and that the second choice of question is a stand-alone, general essay question. The passage provided in the examination is relevant only to the question which refers to it specifically; using only this passage as the basis of an answer to the second question on the text does not therefore provide enough material for a general discursive answer.

The passage-based questions continue to be significantly more popular than the discursive ones, and there were very few responses to general questions such as **Questions 12, 18 and 22**. Those candidates who did attempt them often achieved good marks because of the quality of their engagement with the text and the persuasiveness of their arguments, though they were sometimes over-reliant on generalisations and could have benefited from more specific references.

There were very few rubric errors and very few examples of rushed or incomplete final answers. There were a few examples of candidates answering more than the requisite number of questions but this was less prevalent than in previous sessions.

Section A: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1: For Heidi With Blue Hair

The strongest answers were able to comment on both 'amusing' and 'serious' in equal measure, including recognition of the sarcasm and irony but it was also obvious how difficult some candidates find it to discuss how things are amusing, or how writers make things so, in an essay context. This was a popular question but often led to candidates writing at great length about freedom of expression; teachers were often castigated as insensitive, candidates argued that the headmistress of the school was victimising Heidi and that the poem was all about standing up for rights. Candidates discussed how Heidi's case was an allegory of the little person standing up against oppression.

When this case was thoroughly argued, and when there was some balance to the argument, enabling the amusing details to be acknowledged, this resulted in a successful answer. When the text itself became a springboard for a more general polemic and the amusing details became limited to just showing how the teachers were shown to be stupid, candidates did not achieve as highly. Candidates often truncated quotations, and referred to: "although dyed hair was not/specifically forbidden, yours/was" as a complete statement, and the basis of a lengthy diatribe on victimisation. In responses to this poem, little was made of the description of the hair itself; some candidates saw the detail as unnecessary, and some suggested it was indicative of mourning. Candidates who argued it exemplified mourning commented on the fact that blue and black are colours associated with funerals, or that blue refers to sadness. The outlandish description was

only acknowledged by a few candidates. Thus, few were able to see any justification in sending Heidi home. Her mother's death was often declared to be the cause and justification for Heidi's actions. Few candidates commented on the description of her father as "freedom-loving". Candidates could have commented on the use of the verbs "shimmered" and "twittered" in the fifth stanza, though stronger candidates did address these details, and these candidates made some perceptive comments.

Question 2: *The Trees Are Down*

This question produced a great deal of strong answers which were able to focus on Mew's feelings of loss. The strongest responses also addressed the other part of the question regarding how she writes 'movingly'. A common feature of answers was the assertion that the poem looks like a tree, something which may or may not be correct, but which was never argued as being relevant to or contributing either to feelings of loss or the way the writing is 'moving'. Surprisingly few candidates made enough of the material from Revelation at the start and its echo at the end, in the voice of "an angel", but better answers did incorporate this material, seeing the destruction of the trees as a direct 'sin' against God, and to be wept over. Some answers spent a lot of time discussing the dead rat but forgot to link it to the terms of the question. Some candidates thought its death was caused by the destruction of the trees; dying through homelessness. Stronger answers showed understanding and made sensitive and relevant comments. All of the higher achieving answers looked very closely at the language of the poem, analysed its effect, and focused on the question. Very few candidates found nothing relevant to say, though there were some candidates who were determined to see it in allegorical terms about Mew and her family and relationships. One frequent assertion posed by candidates was that each tree being felled was actually symbolic of a family member. What hampered this approach was that for much of the time candidates were asserting a meaning rather than exploring how the language of the poem shows Mew writing movingly about her feelings.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3: *Last Sonnet*

This question produced many answers which seemed to show little genuine understanding of what the poem was about, or at least what the opening octet was saying. Candidates made a little more of the sestet because they could understand more easily what emotions Keats might have while "Pillowed" on his "fair love's ripening breast". Candidates struggled to make much of Keats's emotions about the star, and therefore, almost inevitably, did not make enough of the contrast between the octet and the sestet in their responses. Some candidates had some overall understanding of what the poem was saying, but did not focus tightly enough on the terms of the question, and did not identify the 'powerful emotions' clearly enough, or made little attempt to show how the writing was 'moving'. Other candidates wrote at length on the moving nature of the writing, without fully understanding what it was saying. There were, however, some very detailed and well-focused responses, sensitive to the writing, and fully aware of Keats's powerful emotions. Such knowledgeable and analytical responses achieved the highest marks.

Question 4: *Heart and Mind*

Some candidates found this poem challenging and felt compelled to explain it, line by line, and image by image, but a good understanding was shown by some. Candidates need to be aware that when a question asks them to 'explore', it expects them to do more than to make the meaning clear. Few responses genuinely wrote about the ways Sitwell uses imagery, or argued what was 'powerful' about the 'effect' this had in the poem. There was much assertion that certain features of the poem were powerful but the responses clearly needed to do more than merely state what is powerful to truly reveal 'the ways' the writer 'uses images to powerful effect'. Nevertheless, most candidates appeared to engage with the lion and lioness in the opening stanzas and were able to comment on the "amber dust", "heat of the Sun" and "fire of that sun the heart" with confidence and enjoyment. The inverted syntax was handled with assurance but the "rippling muscles like a sea" and the "rose-prickles of bright paws" were beautiful images appreciated by only a few candidates. Stanzas two and four provided a great deal of challenge and were often glossed over or ignored.

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Selected Poems*

Question 5: *Miracle on St David's Day*

Relatively few candidates attempted this question, but there was some evidence of real enjoyment. Those who did attempt it were often hampered by their lack of clearly identifying Clarke's 'experience in this poem' and then their unwillingness or inability to analyse her language in order to address the question (how she movingly conveys the impact of this experience). Often responses merely worked their way through the poem explaining what was happening. Stronger answers identified this as the 'experience' Clarke had had. The strongest answers argued that for Clarke, the effects of poetry on this occasion seemed a kind of 'miracle' as referenced by the title of the poem, and, through their judicious exploration of some of the language of the poem, were able to see that this was an emotional impact and thus was 'moving'. Few answers actually engaged with the 'miracle' or discussed the significance of the daffodils. Few candidates analysed the whole poem but its length meant there was much worthy of comment and that did not restrict them from achieving high marks as they were able to write in depth and in an informed way about those areas of the poem that caught their imagination.

Question 6: *Buzzard*

Most candidates were able to understand the poem and make some relevant response and were able to see some contrast in the poem between the buzzard and the crows, but this was often not explored far enough. Most were also able to see the contrast between the bird alive and dead, but the language, which is deceptively simple in this poem, received little attention except in the strongest answers.

Section B: Prose

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer At Ease*

Question 7

This rich and detailed passage was a popular choice. Achebe's use of the senses was a clear way into an analysis of 'this moment', allowing candidates to explore the imagery in some detail. Few responses reflected any sympathy for Obi whilst appreciating his confused state and virtual meltdown with the redeeming feature of his last minute remorse for his treatment of Clara. Stronger answers started at the beginning with the unsavoury picture of the doctor counting his "wad of notes carefully" linking it to the theme of corruption and Obi's previous views on bribery. Stronger responses also interrogated the core of the passage in detail noting Achebe's use of time markers and the description of the weather and atmosphere to build up 'tension'. The central simile of the "panicky fly" was also highlighted. Responses that only dealt with a narrow part of the passage were self-penalising, many choosing to deal with Clara and Obi's predicament regarding the abortion and then skipping to the end and the cliff-hanger. Some contextualisation of the passage would have helped candidates to focus on what might be behind the tension or why Obi might be feeling tense. Stronger candidates made something of Obi's anxiety and panic, and used the description of his erratic driving to some effect in making some relevant comments. Few candidates, however, were able to make anything of the effect of the short paragraphs at the tail end of the passage, and some of the images here which indicate Obi's desperation to hear news of Clara.

Question 8

This question often produced narrative responses. A good answer required some argument and illustration of the 'foolish' behaviour of Obi in the novel, and some direction to how Achebe presents the character. The strongest responses were those that took notice of the question and its demands to argue 'how far' Achebe leads a reader to agree with the description of Obi as foolish. Most candidates were alert to this, but weaker responses were too ready to condemn Obi. The mitigating circumstances that convince us that Obi is not foolish were identified by more discerning and thoughtful candidates. For some candidates Obi's arrogance (often asserted rather than argued with textual support), and his stubbornness, as exemplified in the matter of his courtship of Clara, an *osu*, were cited as major features in his foolishness. More thoughtful answers were willing to at least try to see him as a failed idealist, and note the way circumstances piled up against him.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Question 9

This question produced occasional well-argued responses. This is clearly a pivotal moment in the novel, yet few responses really made clear the importance of the action here. There are some major areas where candidates could have made useful and relevant comment, particularly the way this passage presents the excitement over the play, and the progress of rehearsals, what we are shown about Fanny in this extract, the surprise return of Sir Thomas, and the overall sense of expectancy that the passage leaves us with. More subtly, the language of the passage could have been examined to good effect. The central paragraph, in which the authorial voice is heard, could have been explored in depth and is highly relevant. Most commonly, answers to this question usually presented a summary of the action with an assertion that it was memorable.

Question 10

There were only a few responses to this question. Reasons to admire Lady Bertram included her kindness in welcoming Fanny into her home and her genuine affection for her in the latter stages of the novel, especially in comparison with her two sisters (Mrs Norris particularly). Almost all candidates recognised Lady Bertram's indolence as being one of her main weaknesses, though some candidates argued that this was a positive quality.

WILLA CATHER: *My Ántonia*

Question 11

Most answers to this question had a tendency to trace through the passage explaining what was happening. Only a few candidates picked out the suggestion that Krajiek may have murdered Mr Shimerda. Few candidates made the realisation that the suicide of Mr Shimerda would prove a turning point for Antonia and her family. Candidates offered a limited reaction to the presentation of the death of this character, and what it implies about the life he was leading far from his homeland.

Question 12

Of the few responses to this question, most revealed a firm knowledge of the character, and enough knowledge of the text to be able to back up their opinions with some quoted evidence. Lena's independence, her flirtatiousness and her friendship with Jim all featured in the strongest answers which were able to show the personality of Lena, including her ability to make something of her life, and these answers were able to go well beyond commenting on her physical attractiveness. Competent responses revealed a firm knowledge of Lena and exhibited a liking for the character which was at the heart of the question. There was a general recognition that Lena was not merely an attractive woman but a smart and caring one too. Lena's ability to rise above her upbringing and stay true to her plans for a better future for herself resonated with candidates. Lena's flourishing business was a topic which candidates often commented on. Lena's attitude to marriage and men in general was also commented upon but not in as much detail. It was this lack of depth and detail which prevented higher marks being achieved in some cases.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 13

Most candidates were able to comment on what was relevant about the passage, though sometimes the focus slipped from why the betrayal was 'disturbing' to just pity for Silas and condemnation for William: one for the situation he was in, the other for his selfishness and duplicity. Candidates were alert to the disturbing nature of a friend of nine years' acquaintance doing something so calculated and destructive. In fact, William's treatment of Silas was usually discussed adequately by candidates, and sometimes very well. Other ideas could have been explored but were overlooked or mentioned but with little analytical comment, for instance, many candidates narrated that lots were drawn and these confirmed Silas's guilt. Few candidates questioned the appropriateness of this procedure in a Christian community. Another approach explored this part of the novel as evidence of Eliot's mistrust of religious sects, and assembled material from the passage that was disturbing about the way they operated. The arguments were well constructed and the supporting evidence was accurately selected. The strongest answers showed real sensitivity to the views that Eliot is putting across, commenting on her use of irony and to the language of the passage such as Dane's use of 'brother' towards Silas and his references to Satan.

Question 14

Candidates often struggled to gather sufficient textual detail to respond effectively to this question and very few had a broad enough range of material and understanding of what the question required to produce a fully developed response. Candidates were usually able to cite Silas's lack of childcare experience, and acknowledge the debt of gratitude he had for the assistance he gets from Dolly Winthrop. Weaker responses

found it difficult to focus on Silas's parenting difficulties and instead discussed the value of Eppie to him, often as a replacement for his stolen gold.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 15

This question encouraged some good responses to how Frayn's writing powerfully creates tension at this moment in the novel. Candidates commented on Stephen's having to face what is presented as an ordeal on his own; his fear was noted. The silence of the scene and the intruding rumbles, possibly of thunder, were explored and commented on by many candidates. The length or shortness of sentences was commented on as contributing to the tension, though often candidates did not develop this argument enough for it to have full credence. Many candidates focused on the confrontation with the dogs and the local children, as well as the description of the landscape and the "uneasy yellow light". The strongest answers were those that explored the climax of the last few paragraphs and the devastating last line.

Question 16

Candidates who answered this question seemed to want to write about the Haywards as a family and then include Mrs Hayward as part of this, rather than deal with her as a separate character. This clearly limited such responses. When Mrs Hayward was dealt with as an individual, there was often little sharp enough detail to support the general points that were made about her. Her role in Stephen's 'sexual awakening' was sometimes discussed, but some candidates did not mention this. Most candidates made a general point that the mysterious nature of Mrs Hayward intrigues Stephen when Keith declares his mother is a German spy, and their close observations begin. Mrs Hayward's part in an ideal family, and her 'class', was commented on by most candidates who were aware that part of what attracts Stephen is how different Mrs Hayward is to his own mother whom he perceives as undistinguished. All candidates were able to recognise Stephen's growing understanding of the true nature of the Hayward household behind the veneer and particularly the relationship between Keith's parents. Candidates also included some detailed discussion of the scales falling from Stephen's eyes, regarding his heroine's real life behind the 'calm' exterior which was actually far from the perfection he wished for in his own family. Stronger candidates chose to compare Mrs Hayward and Stephen's own mother, who is always second best. The key word 'fascinating' in this question was often forgotten by candidates or translated as 'attractive'.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Question 17

This question was reasonably popular but candidates did not often develop their responses beyond listing quotations which showed Will's surprise or fear in the journey with Blackwood. Most noted by candidates was that Will was an excellent sailor in conditions he knew, but was terrified in the unfamiliar setting of Hawkesbury. Some weaker answers did not focus tightly enough on the 'strangeness' of Will's experience and tried to bring Blackwood into the same answer, missing the focus of the question. The strongest answers offered a good range of detail and ensured that quoted material was explored and directed fully to the key terms of the question. Strong responses also looked at Grenville's language in presenting the scene. Many answers started well enough but then failed to effectively deal with the material concerning the Aboriginals, and Will's perception of them. The best answers handled this effectively and explored the descriptions of the landscape in some detail.

Question 18

Most candidates answering on this question either did not understand what the question meant by the English legal system, or they did not have enough relevant material to use and therefore produced limited answers. Some responses to this question lacked detail and were irrelevant. Some candidates made the mistake of discussing the English class system rather than the English legal system. There were one or two partly relevant comments made, but the answers as a whole were not focused on the question. Other responses did not examine the material set in the context of England at all and this limited the response to how the newcomers treated the Aboriginals. Injustices were mentioned by most, but the responses were generally limited.

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 19

Candidates answering this question were often unable to discuss this as a powerful moment in the novel or to discuss how Narayan's writing makes it so. In this situation, candidates would have been more successful if they had contextualised the passage and to then assess what effect this event has on the rest of the novel. The presentation of Susila's unpleasant experience, and Krishna's responses to it might then have been explored in the light of this. Most candidates did not comment on the complete change in tone in the space of a few lines that this passage features. The happiness and well-being of house-hunting together and the dreams of an idyllic garden of their own are transformed to anxiety and panic by the "red and trembling" Susila emerging from the green-doored lavatory. The details in the second half of the passage are numerous and could have been developed into an effective answer. The physical and emotional state of Susila is powerfully presented, and with analysis could have formed the basis of a good response, but this was rarely attempted. The irony of Krishna's attempts to reassure Susila, had the passage been contextualised, might have formed a very useful response in discussing the power of this passage, given the fatal consequences of this moment.

Question 20

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

There were some strong responses to the passage which made use of plenty of relevant material to analyse in order to answer on the ways Thorpe makes the extract a 'shocking depiction of war'. The strongest answers adopted a methodical approach and worked through the passage. The dramatic opening with the brutality of the Boche and the "darkest shadow of war – that of blood" was noted. Some good analysis of the graphic presentation of the dead bodies was provided by candidates, and suitable attention was given to this and its effect on those who were called upon to witness it. The contrast between the violence of these deaths and the only other death experienced by the narrator, that of his mother "at peace in her bed", was sometimes put to good use. Weaker answers often got this far and then began to struggle, but quite a few candidates were able to discuss the way the swaying body of the hanged resistance leader Petit Ours was used as a threat or warning to villagers, including even children who were systematically "class by class" led to see it and take in its implications.

Approximately a third of responses went on to look at the description of the Gestapo officer, or the act of shaving the inner tube of his tyre. Those who looked at this section and discussed it in full, demonstrating its relevance, greatly increased the scope of their response and were rewarded accordingly. What was often missing was an overview of the effect of the atrocities and of the constant threat of violence on the villagers. Candidates commented on the irony in the fact that the events happened on a Sunday when most people would have been to church and the fact that the bodies are in the Mairie, a building used daily by the French for the workings of a democracy. Another point of irony worthy of comment was the black gloves of the Gestapo officer doing "a little dance" whilst, ironically, still being the one to have Petit Ours hung on the bridge for innocent children to see. It was noted too that his faceless 'minions' probably felt more in common with the narrator than his commander. The meaning of the term 'shocking' in the question proved difficult for candidates to grasp and many skirted round this choosing instead their own synonyms such as gory, brutal or horrific instead.

Question 22

This question offered candidates a free choice of a 'particularly unpleasant' character to write about. Among those who did answer on this question, sensible choices were Teddie from *Ming's Biggest Prey*, Mr Poldero in *the Phoenix* and Mrs de Ropp and Conradin in *Sredni Vashtar*. Only a few candidates were able to provide enough textual support to gain the higher marks but those that did proved that this type of question can be very successful.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13
Paper 13 Poetry and Prose

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There were very few rubric errors and very few examples of rushed or incomplete final answers. There were a few examples of candidates answering more than the requisite number of questions but this was less prevalent than in previous sessions.

A growing number of candidates are producing work that is difficult to decipher due to illegible handwriting which occurs mostly when candidates are writing at greater length. Candidates should be advised that it is usually more effective to write shorter, legible answers that can be clearly understood, rather than longer responses which cannot be read due to rushed handwriting.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1: *Reservist*

This question was frequently well-handled. Candidates were generally well informed about the Singaporean system and in many cases had been well instructed about the allusions to Don Quixote and Sisyphus. The tone of the poem was recognised by many candidates, and there was some purposeful analysis of the humour and satire within the poem, often explicitly recognising that this is at least in part how feelings are conveyed 'powerfully'. The imagery of the poem was frequently explored effectively, although the final stanza was sometimes neglected, perhaps because the poem is so rich in detail. It was gratifying to note the relish with which candidates treated the topic of humour in many answers to this question.

Question 2: *Because I Could Not Stop For Death*

The poem elicited many individual personal interpretations, often showing real engagement with its many ambiguities. Most candidates grasped at least some of the deeper implications of the poem, and were able to explore some of the imagery to good effect. Most were disturbed by the personification of Death as a kindly gentleman, because this was so far from their own idea of death. The coverage of different stages of life and the possible implications of courtship or even seduction were often appreciated. Stronger answers engaged with some of the more difficult images, for example of the sun passing her, rather than the other way round. Often such responses went on to consider the significance of “Since then – ‘tis Centuries”, opening up further interpretative avenues. Comment on punctuation was potentially appropriate and fruitful, and there were many answers which grappled successfully with Dickinson’s use of dashes. One or two individual answers struck out boldly to declare that they did not find the poem disturbing at all, although this reaction would have benefitted from further exploration. Nearly all responses to this question gave the impression that the poem had provoked some sort of thought in the candidate.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3: *She was a Phantom of Delight*

This question elicited a mixed range of responses. Most candidates attempted to deliver a ‘translation’ of the poem, and many recognised the stages of the process whereby the initial vision seen by the speaker became “flesh and blood” with an accompanying increase in the degree to which her reality was appreciated. Some candidates assumed that the lady had died, imposing an elegiac reading on the poem, and there were other examples of basic readings. One interpretation provided a rather dismissive slant by offering a truncated textual citation to support the recognition of her mortality “A Creature not too bright or good/For human nature’s daily food”, which acquires a slightly different emphasis if only the first line of this couplet is quoted. Some candidates offered a feminist interpretation about how Wordsworth saw his wife in terms of exploitative physical appearance quoting the line “moment’s ornament”, which in some cases was compounded by her value in domestic terms “the pulse of the machine”. Stronger responses moved beyond translation or explanation to focus more closely on the ‘powerful emotions’ required by the question.

Question 4: *Coming Home*

Although this question lent itself to the overriding comment on structure that one family member is presented per paragraph, this convenient division of attention was not without its pitfalls, and the poem proved deceptively simple for some candidates. Candidates offered a wide range of interpretations. For some, the mother’s “awkward” hug denoted estrangement rather than the renewed surprise that her son is a grown man. This led some to surmise that this estrangement extended to the father-son relationship as well, in some cases the hedge-repair references taken for a metaphor for mending a broken relationship. Conversely, many candidates took the reference to “Dad” to indicate that the speaker’s relationship with his father was much closer than with his mother. Surprisingly few took the hedge-mending literally, as if unaware that the speaker’s father might be a farmer, which led to some metaphorical dead-ends with the “pockets filled with filings of hay” indicating the father working hard for little financial reward. Similarly, a wide range of interpretations were attached to the grandfather’s portrait. For many candidates, the relative brevity of his stanza denoted his shorter life expectancy, but the shaky bottleneck was variously a symptom of alcoholism, arthritis or dementia. There were some interesting comments about the idea that, like the grandfather, vintage wine improves with age, although it was difficult to find any firm evidence that the poem suggests this idea. Generally, the candidates who stayed closest to the poem and avoided too much speculation about the family’s history achieved higher marks on this question.

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Selected Poems*

Question 5: *Heron at Port Talbot*

Of the two questions on this paper, this was the more popular, and was often handled reasonably well. Most candidates commented on the “conflict of man and nature” within the poem, and one or two went some way further, writing persuasively about the heron acting as a “surveyor” to “re-open the heron roads”, in order to re-colonise the industrial works for nature.

Question 6: *Clocks*

This question provided relatively few responses, and of those who attempted it, even fewer made significant progress in analysing it. One of the problems was that most candidates appeared to have little idea of the actual age of the child, despite the clues about language acquisition embedded in the poem, so that the nature of the parent-child relationship was almost inevitably vague at best. This was further compounded by the apparent unfamiliarity for many candidates of the idea of using dandelions to tell the time. Very few answers specifically addressed the ‘so movingly’ aspect of the question.

Section B: Prose

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer At Ease*

Question 7

No Longer At Ease proved a reasonably popular text on this paper, with this being the favoured preference for the majority of candidates. Though some effective responses were produced, many candidates were side-tracked into narrative accounts of the scenes on the dance-floor, or into general disquisitions about bribery, corruption and colonialism, and few seemed to know the text well enough to link what was learned about Obi here to his life elsewhere. This was compounded in some cases by the lack of distinction made between Lagos and Umuofia. There was a good deal of comments on the foreshadowing derived from Obi being left alone when Bisi was asked to dance, and very little recognition of any of the humour in the extract.

Question 8

This question invited a response to the presentation of a character. Candidates who answered this question generally had a fairly limited knowledge of the character, and there was some acknowledgement of his likely collusion in the world of bribery and corruption inhabited by official functionaries. Few candidates made much of this limited knowledge, and were able to move beyond his rather unprepossessing appearance and behaviour to offer a response showing some balance and compassion towards him. It should be noted that questions concerning the presentation of a character other than the central figure in a novel may arise in this paper, and such questions invite a personal response rather than a pre-prepared character study.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Question 9

There was a reasonable take-up for this text and this question in particular. The passage-based question was the more popular option, and was often handled at least competently and sometimes extremely well, with a good sense of the symbolism of the gate, Fanny's morality, and the issues involving Maria and Mr Rushworth. Conversely, as with question 10, there were some answers which confused or conflated the Bertram sisters. Nevertheless, this was a question where many able candidates were able to take advantage of the opportunities it presented.

Question 10

As with the passage-based question, there were some who confused the two sisters. Most candidates who picked the correct Bertram spent most of their time considering the rivalry between the sisters for Henry Crawford, with the consequence that sympathy was fairly readily forthcoming. The few who ranged more widely were able to arrive at a rather more judicious balance between what was Julia's fault and how much others were at fault in their treatment of her.

WILLA CATHER: *My Ántonia*

Question 11

This proved an accessible question for the candidates who had studied this text. The usual approach was to work through the extract offering a commentary on the characters, particularly Ambrosch, who provoked universal indignation, often arising from a misreading that he wanted to dress his sister up and make a fool of her. Consideration of how Ántonia's life on the prairie added to the sympathy featured in some stronger responses, and candidates were successful in concentrating on the 'how' of the question.

Question 12

There was plenty of material available from which candidates could have constructed a strong response to this question. For those who did attempt it, the main focus was on hardship and deprivation, and the converse, those qualities which made the prairies attractive, was rarely given much consideration. For some, the main consideration was the relationship between Ántonia and Jim, which was in some respects a sensible approach.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 13

This question was not always well-handled, with a significant minority getting little further than Dunstan's wandering round Silas's cottage asking himself rhetorical questions. Stronger responses were able to see the build-up of drama through narrative and the contrast between the warmth within the cottage and the darkness without, and the uncertainty as to when and if Silas might return. Dunstan's felonious intent was condemned by relatively few.

Question 14

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 15

This was a very popular option, and was often well-handled. The extract was particularly rich in disturbing elements; therefore examiners did not demand exhaustive coverage. Most recognised that much of the disturbance centred on Mr Hayward and his caning of Keith. Some candidates got little further than this, but others went on to consider Stephen's encounter with Mrs Hayward. Many candidates misread the text, notably that it is Mr Hayward rather than Keith who addresses Stephen as "old bean". Candidates who made the correct ascription were often enabled to go on to make some useful comment about Keith's resemblance to his father, often linking this to the bayonet sharpening. At all levels of achievement, candidates provided evidence of solid study of the text and, in many cases, understanding and enjoyment.

Question 16

Most candidates who attempted this question followed the approach of listing Mr Hayward's psychopathic, abusive and aggressive tendencies, often struggling to find very much to say about Stephen's father beyond the occasional interest he showed in Stephen's progress at school. This approach often enabled candidates to develop a reasonable response overall, although several lapsed into a character study in which Mr Hayward's treatment of his wife was a central focus, even though this was rather irrelevant to the question. Some failed to note the supplementary instruction in the question, and sought to include material from the Question 15 extract, although this was seldom more than the odd quotation.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Question 17

The extract is for this question is particularly rich, and success often sprang from judicious selection of relevant material. The build-up to the failed attempt to kill the kangaroo was a central focus of many responses, and many found the description of the kangaroo and the effect of its appearance on Will's perception memorable. The contrast between the Thornhills' disjuncture with the land and the aboriginals' harmonious relationship with it was often discussed fruitfully, although this sometimes led candidates into digressions about the abusive treatment of the natives, with little reference to the extract. However, responses to this text and question showed clear engagement with the novel's subject matter and themes.

Question 18

Although this question was less popular than the passage-based option, there was some take-up, although candidates frequently limited their opportunities by failing to read the question properly. Some assumed the question referred only to Will, rather than also commenting on Sal's role, which the question facilitated. Other candidates failed to note the reference to London, going on to write at some length about events in Australia. However, candidates who avoided those pitfalls were able to write productively about the hardships of London life, with most mentioning bed-bug eating and many going on to write passionately about the social hierarchy in London, though this was not always directly relevant to the "hardship of the Thornhills' life".

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 19

Candidates who selected this option generally found plenty to comment on, perhaps unsurprisingly given the context, and most were able to identify features of Narayan's writing which were powerfully moving. Differentiation arose from the extent to which candidates were able to move beyond the circumstances of the extract – the widower's reaction to the funeral of his beloved wife – to consider the way in which Narayan presents this.

Question 20

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

Although this question was a popular option, responses rarely reached the higher bands in the mark scheme. Candidates showed a tendency to become too preoccupied with providing descriptive detail or narrative recall and a surprising number of responses overlooked the discovery of the new room and its significance. What was lacking from many responses was any substantial engagement with the ways in which Ballard uses language to create drama. Some candidates were distracted by the topicality of the subject matter of over-population and went into discussion of themes at the expense of text.

Question 22

This question was often reasonably competently handled. Ravi's plight aroused a good deal of sympathy, with some candidates demonstrating their empathy with some brief and relevant autobiographical writing. However, few candidates moved very far beyond the development of the narrative to consider the 'ways' in very much detail, the consequence being that that answers in the higher band were rare.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/22
Paper 22 Drama

Key messages

The most successful responses considered the specific terms of the question and selected the most pertinent and significant material from the relevant play in order to answer it.

Many responses could have been improved by including explorations of language and stagecraft, without the use of jargon or irrelevant literary terminology.

Convincing responses showed implicit knowledge of the wider context of the play in passage-based questions and in discursive questions demonstrated a strong knowledge of the entire text, using a range of direct quotations to support their answer.

Weaker responses were characterised by merely ‘working through’ a passage chronologically and giving excessive socio-cultural or socio-historical information without a sharp focus on the question which was necessary to gain the higher marks.

A personal engagement with the text and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers. Such responses showed a clear awareness of the intentions of the writer as playwright, writing plays to be performed on stage.

General comments

Many candidates showed a profound engagement with the characters and ideas of their set texts and the emotional impact the texts have on the audience.

The strongest responses were able to focus sharply on the question, leaving behind the essays they may have written previously, assimilating their preparatory essay-writing experiences to structure this new response. They did not spend too much time on introductions but answered directly or set out the key points of their answer concisely and clearly. Discursive responses ranged confidently across the text, pulling out relevant material to support a compelling argument; passage-based responses kept a sharp focus on the extract itself and when links were made to the wider text, these were fully focused on the topic of the question.

Weaker responses did not maintain a focus on the question throughout and often relied upon prior learning which was clear in stock responses to the text with no relevance to the specific question being answered. Discursive responses often lacked a cohesive argument or clear focus on the question. Conversely responses could outline a clear argument and showed general knowledge of the text but could not support these arguments with specific, precise textual reference. Passage-based responses often drifted outside of the passage into areas that had little relevance to the question, or provided a general analysis of the whole passage rather than focusing on areas of it that were pertinent to the question.

The ability to read closely and critically analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without using obscure literary terminology, remains the hallmark of the strongest responses. Some candidates showed an astonishing ability to do this in considerable depth under examination conditions. While most candidates used the terminology of Greek Tragedy (such as hubris, hamartia) to good effect, there remain unnecessary comments whereby candidates pinpoint the antagonist/protagonist in the play without any relevance to the question. Using poetic terminology such as caesura and enjambment to describe drama texts is equally misguided.

Candidates who showed an accurate understanding of the class system pertaining to early twentieth century Britain and avoided simplistic labelling of ideas such as capitalism or socialism in response to *An Inspector Calls* generally wrote more successful answers. Less successful responses often expressed only a partial understanding or sometimes a complete misunderstanding of these terms. Responses to *The Merchant of Venice* often wrote at some length reflecting on how an Elizabethan audience might have responded and giving background information about the Jewish Ghetto in Venice, which was often not related to the question and therefore wasted valuable time which could have been spent analysing the passage.

Although the message about candidates numbering their questions correctly appears to be being communicated, there are still a few who do not do this clearly or accurately. There is a tendency to label an answer to **Question 7** for example as 7:1 and **Question 8** as 7:2. Candidates must label their questions clearly; the importance of doing this should not be underestimated. Candidates divided their time more successfully on Paper 22 than in the previous session. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Successful responses to this question evaluated Brady's behaviour by considering his dramatic playing to the crowd, his manipulation of Howard and disparaging comments on both Bert Cates and evolution. An exploration of his emotive language such as: "Evil-ution ... peddlers of poison ... filth and muck" was often the hallmark of a strong answer. Such responses commented on his prejudice and ignorance. Weaker responses could explain Brady's standpoint and relate it to the content of the scene but were less effective in assessing his behaviour or exploring his oratory. Few candidates mentioned his self-aggrandisement and the vindictiveness towards Cates who, according to Brady, should have "the full penalty of the law" meted out to him.

Question 2

This question was answered extremely well by candidates whose knowledge of the play enabled them to make detailed and wide-ranging reference to support the points made. These candidates paid careful attention to the key word in this question, "striking", and in this respect considered Hornbeck's humour, contrast to the people of Hillsboro, cynicism, hatred of Brady and shocking response to his death. Thematic points were made about his own prejudice and narrow-mindedness being revealed at the end of the play in contrast to Drummond's more open and charitable mind set. High achieving answers were impressively exhaustive, with a sophisticated overview.

Although most responses showed knowledge of Hornbeck's role in the play, less effective answers either could not provide precise supporting evidence or did not evaluate what was particularly striking about him. Many surprisingly insisted that his views on the trial were neutral, widely misquoting and misunderstanding his statement: "I am both Poles and the Equator..."

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This question elicited a wide range of varied responses, most of which showed a strong engagement with the passage and the play as a whole. The strongest responses concentrated clearly on the intensity of the scene. They showed awareness of dramatic effects, such as the airing of the as yet unspoken taboo of Eddie's feelings for Catherine, the varying tones, gestures and movement and the increasing intensity of the language. Strong answers commented concisely on Alfieri's final speech, exploring both its imagery and how his engagement with Eddie's plight and sense of fatalism contribute to the audience's appreciation of the tragedy to come. There were few weak answers. Some candidates misplaced the context or wrote about the context and ignored the passage. Other candidates made no comment on the language and omitted Alfieri's speech. Conversely some candidates wrote about the role of Alfieri in the play as a whole at some length and left little time to explore the passage in relation to the specific question.

Question 4

This question was answered well when candidates paid attention to the key terms “powerfully convey” and selected the most relevant material to explore the drama. Weaker answers explained what the rules of the community were but without any exploration of how Miller portrays them. A range of rules were considered such as the honour code, concepts of family and masculinity. Candidates were very well versed in these issues but the strongest answers looked, for example, at the placing and intensity of the Vinny Bolzano story, the vivid portrayal of the community’s reaction to Eddie’s betrayal and Eddie’s willingness to die or kill in order to maintain his honour. There were some strong answers which explored the difference between law and the community’s code, though less confident answers struggled to make this clear. Some candidates confused Eddie’s ideas about protecting Catherine and subsequent dislike of Rodolpho as a macro community rule rather than Eddie’s own personal preoccupation. The question required candidates to discuss wider rules of the community Eddie is embedded in. Some candidates were confused about the character of Vinny Bolzano and had either forgotten his name or misunderstood the significance of his character.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

Strong responses were characterised by a close focus on what the candidate found striking in the way Priestley chooses to open the play. Some examples of the material selected included: Birling’s desire to impress the higher class, Gerald indicating his social climbing, the palpable tension between Sheila and Gerald foreshadowing his affair with Eva/Daisy, hints of Eric’s drinking problem, Mrs Birling’s conventional views and an incipient generational divide. These ideas were often then connected to Priestley’s aims in the play as a whole.

Weaker responses tended towards character sketches, treating the play as a novel rather than drama. There were some unsupported assertions about the foreshadowing and misunderstandings such as Sheila being childish in her use of “Mummy”, Birling being aristocratic and Lady Croft being inferior because she comes from the country.

Question 6

An awareness of the structure of the play informed the best answers which moved beyond an analysis of the relationship to consider its dramatic impact in relation to the rest of the plot. Issues such as the relationship being the climax of the play, Eric’s dramatic entrance at the beginning of Act 3, the dramatic ironies surrounding Mrs Birling’s lack of realisation as to the identity of the father of Eva’s child, the importance of the relationship in terms of theme and the dramatic intensity of Eric’s revelations were fully explored.

Weaker responses tended to be narrative, lacked attention to how the relationship was dramatic or lacked textual support. Occasionally a candidate wrote about the wrong character in their response, such as Gerald, Mr Birling and Eric’s relationship with Sheila.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Knowing the context of the passage (that the French have just killed the unarmed baggage boys) was an advantage in exploring Henry’s powerful anger at the beginning of the scene. Confident responses understood that the king is as yet unaware that he has won the battle and commented on the powerful imagery in his first speech. The striking way in which the victory is revealed by Montjoy, the contrast with his previous demeanour, his vivid description of the horrors of war, Henry’s humility and history making were fully explored in the strongest answers.

A significant number of candidates seemed unfamiliar with the context of the scene thinking it was at the beginning of the campaign. Some digressed into other parts of the play and concentrated on the narrative rather than commenting in any detail on the power of the language in the scene.

Question 8

There were detailed and well-balanced responses to this question which understood what it was asking and ranged widely through the play in terms of evidence. Most referred to the Agincourt and Harfleur speeches, Henry's testing of morale the night before Agincourt, the greater 'inclusiveness' of the English force as compared to the French, and the ability to win against fearful odds. On the other side of the argument, candidates referred to the rejection of Falstaff, the traitors, the hanging of Bardolph, the antics of Pistol and Williams's view of the King.

The question was answered unsuccessfully when candidates wrote in a generalised fashion without giving any supporting evidence or quotations from the text to justify their argument.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

This question was answered very well when candidates paid attention to its terms. "Vividly convey" draws the candidates' attention towards the writing and asks for more than a narrative description of the passage. The question asked about Shylock's thoughts and feelings and some answers, which were strong in other respects, were constrained by an insistence on 'working through' the whole passage chronologically paying undue attention to the thoughts of Salerio and Solanio and giving extensive background information about the treatment of the Jews in seventeenth century Venice. Other answers were unfocused, writing an essay about sympathy for Shylock, sometimes making the assertion that his final speech is the greatest in the play but providing very little exploration of the ideas expressed in it or Shylock's feelings, as the question requires. The best responses explored Shylock's anger and pain at the mocking Venetians and his daughter's betrayal and how this is conveyed by the repetition ("none so well ... flesh and blood") and playing on the word "dam". Stronger responses commented on Shylock's rage at Antonio and his desire for revenge being firmly rooted in the language used. The strongest answers selected the final speech for detailed exploration, looking at the effects of literary devices such as the use of rhetorical questions, listing, antithesis, the powerful build-up of tension, with increasingly dark imagery, to "And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge". Candidates should be advised that the most successful approach is to focus on the passage itself, to use quotations from it and to avoid digressing at length into other part of the play.

Question 10

Many candidates who answered this question simply did not know enough about Launcelot to give sufficient evidence from the play to support the points made. Successful responses referred to his 'comic relief' role in the scene where he debates with himself and the farcical elements of his meeting with his blind father. They commented on the entertainment value of his role in Jessica's elopement, his relationship with Jessica and his move from Shylock to Bassanio's service and thus from Venice to Belmont. Candidates who could provide quotation and comment on his malapropisms received the highest marks.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/23
Paper 23 Drama

Key messages

The most successful responses considered the specific terms of the question and selected the most pertinent and significant material from the relevant play in order to answer it.

Many responses could have been improved by including explorations of language and stagecraft, without the use of jargon or irrelevant literary terminology.

Convincing responses showed implicit knowledge of the wider context of the play in passage-based questions and in discursive questions demonstrated a strong knowledge of the entire text, using a range of direct quotations to support their answer.

Weaker responses were characterised by merely ‘working through’ a passage chronologically and giving excessive socio-cultural or socio-historical information without a sharp focus on the question which was necessary to gain the higher marks.

A personal engagement with the text and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers. Such responses showed a clear awareness of the intentions of the writer as playwright, writing plays to be performed on stage.

General comments

Many candidates showed a profound engagement with the characters and ideas of their set texts and the emotional impact the texts have on the audience.

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Some rubric infringements occurred on Paper 23, specifically in **Question 4** for *A View from the Bridge*, whereby candidates failed to adhere to the instructions which stated clearly: '**Do not use the passage in Question *3 in answering this question**'. By using the passage as one of the two moments they found moving in the play, it was difficult for candidates to achieve the higher marks. Although the message about candidates numbering their questions correctly appears to be being communicated, there are still a few who do not do this clearly or accurately. There is a tendency to label an answer to **Q7** for example as 7:1 and **Q8** as 7:2. Candidates must label their questions clearly; the importance of doing this should not be underestimated. Candidates divided their time more successfully on Paper 23 than in the previous session. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J.LAWRENCE & R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

To answer this question fully, candidates needed to focus on the “entertaining” aspects of the scene and show an understanding of what was amusing in this scene for the audience. Weaker candidates interpreted “entertaining” as interesting or engaging and worked through the passage at a literal level, explaining what was happening. The best candidates linked the scene to context, commenting on the reason for the trial, which is to show how insignificant the case against Cates is and as a lighter moment before the serious tone of the trial begins and before Drummond and Brady really do battle. Most candidates found comments to make related to both physical and verbal drama, for example the braces and honorary title, with the best candidates exploring the humour of the “lavender suspenders” as an example of Drummond’s scoring points off Brady by emphasising them in court by snapping them “jauntily” and stating he had bought them in Brady’s home town as though Brady were responsible for them. Some commented on the linking of Brady and God by Dunlap, indicating that he believes in both, apparently equally, which was a source of amusement for candidates. The best candidates commented on amusing dialogue, for example Drummond’s asking Dunlap a useless question, “How are you?”, because he had been told he could not reject Dunlap without asking him a question. This was linked to the wider whole text theme, which is the need to look beyond surface meaning rather than just accept it. Most candidates commented on the “Colonel” title given to Brady and then, entertainingly, because of its lack of substance, given “temporarily” to Drummond.

Question 2

Relatively few answers were submitted but they tended to be either very strong answers or brief and narrative in approach, re-telling what happened to Cates and Rachel in the play. The best answers explored the principles of “the right to think” and showed understanding of how it is explored dramatically in the play. These responses engaged with the text and explored Rachel’s role in the play from unthinking believer to timid thinker by the end of the play, and how memorable she is in contrast to Brady’s dogmatic certainty. Rachel is also memorable as the authors show her not being convinced by Darwin’s theory when she reads it, stressing the point she has “the right to think” and to decide for herself. Strong answers also focused on how “the right to think” had been removed from Hillsboro people and often considered how Hornbeck cut through the complacency of Hillsboro with his sarcasm, referencing his behaviour, for example, to buy a hotdog or bible, or to feed his stomach or soul, seeing both of equal importance.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

The AO4 requirement for candidates to make “a personal response” was explicitly addressed in this question. Most candidates, at all levels, were comfortable in addressing this personal aspect of the question which asked them what “Miller’s writing makes you feel about Eddie”, but some did not make a direct response to this, instead focusing on how the tension made them feel or what they felt about the situation,

rather than focusing on the key words of the question. Candidates were required to discuss Eddie specifically.

The best answers responded thoroughly to the drama on stage, analysing Miller's writing to show explicitly how he made them feel about Eddie. Feelings of anger, disbelief, sympathy and outrage towards Eddie were explored in relation to his jealous behaviour and bullying treatment of Rodolpho and stereotypical ideas of masculinity. Candidates expressed dismay at how Eddie could try to come between Catherine and Rodolpho and his sarcasm and put-down of the perceived talents of Rodolpho. Weaker responses misread the sarcasm in Eddie's listing of these talents indicating he was jealous as, being devoid of these, he had no choice but to work on the water front. The best responses explored the stage directions of Eddie twisting and ripping the paper, when he "has bent the rolled paper and it suddenly tears in two" which candidates used as evidence that he was losing his patience and becoming out of control, unaware of this visual manifestation of his anger and confirmed by him punching Rodolpho.

Weaker responses approached the question through the writer's methods, listing the stage directions and use of punctuation without exploring them in context of the situation and their dramatic impact. Eddie's clear intentions of opening the subject of boxing as a way to punch Rodolpho was seen by most candidates and his cunning in pretending to want to help Rodolpho defend himself was explored. It was clear to most candidates that it was likely to be Eddie who would want "to step on his foot or sump'm". Other characters' feelings towards Eddie were well used by candidates too, suggesting that Miller invites the audience to feel the same as these other characters; examples included "uneasy", "embarrassed" or "with beginning alarm". Few but the very best candidates considered the drama of the final stage directions in this scene, "MARCO rises" as threatening and foreshadowing Eddie's now inevitable death, making them feel Eddie has gone too far.

Question 4

This question reinforced the need for candidates to carefully read the terms of the question. There were clear instructions for this question stating: **'Do not use the passage in Question *3 in answering this question.'** Some candidates wrote about the passage as one of their moments which prevented them from achieving marks in the higher bands. Most candidates chose two apt moments. The most popular moments were Eddie's death, Catherine's commitment to marry Rodolpho, Marco's lifting chair challenge and Eddie's informing the Immigration Bureau. The best responses were able to use very detailed quotations and close reference to the moments and to comment on the use of language as well as dramatic features to show how Miller made them moving. Weaker responses narrated the moments they felt moved by without commenting on what was specifically moving about them.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

This question elicited a wide range of responses. All candidates, in varying degrees, showed some knowledge of the plot, characters, socio-political background and Priestley's methods. Most candidates understood "gripping", but many ignored this word and focused on "tension" or "suspense", which were presumably more familiar terms and were still considered acceptable although less encouraging of a personal response. The best responses focused on the drama of the passage and put this passage into context, mentioning Mrs Birling's accusations at the end of Act Two or Eric's dramatic entrance "the others are staring at him" accusingly, or the extremities of characters' emotions "distressed, bitterly, miserably, explosively" (though not always exploring them in context to show how they made this a "gripping" opening). Some candidates also commented on how, in contrast to other characters, the Inspector appeared calm. The Inspector's control, as in his contradicting Mr Birling's "No" to Eric's request for a drink, and his brief questioning of Eric, were explored. Eric's emotion, at the end of the passage, as the enormity of what he has done strikes him, and his mother, were features of the strongest responses. There were also some responses where the sensitive questioning of Eric's actual behaviour and revelations of his treatment of Eva, "threatening to make a row", were considered.

Weaker responses did not focus on "gripping", often starting with the dramatic opening in context of the previous scene and the cliff-hanger effect created by Mrs Birling, but then continuing only to explain some other irrelevant topic such as how Sheila had matured/grown up or how the older generation have not learned to accept responsibility while the younger generation have, or capitalism versus socialism. Weaker responses also tended to omit any discussion of the deeper revelations in the Inspector's interrogation of Eric, instead commenting on techniques but not the actual content of the scene.

Question 6

The strongest answers avoided the temptation to write a character study, focusing fully on the term “to what extent” and often considered the meaning of a “villain”. This meant their answers were more evaluative and balanced, showing a clear awareness of his business philosophy, errors of judgement with the Titanic and fear of war, pay-caps (which some saw as sound business practice), or his poor parenting skills, and concluding that these were not sufficient to make him a villain. Most found him at fault as the first member of the family to come into contact with Eva, starting the chain reaction which ultimately led to her suicide. Some candidates were able to compare Arthur Birling’s behaviour to the other members of the family, and Gerald’s, highlighting that what really made him a villain was more his refusal to accept any guilt or responsibility; such responses achieved the higher marks. Arthur Birling’s attitude in believing the whole incident was a “hoax” and the belief that their behaviour would not be publically revealed was also featured in these responses.

Weaker responses tended to list his interactions with characters as evidence of his villainy, while others asserted he was a villain just because he was a capitalist character and the playwright was a socialist, so he intended for the audience to view Mr Birling as the villain of the play. The weakest answers wrote character studies with little reference to the extent Arthur Birling is portrayed as a “villain” specifically and instead discussed the lighting, the Titanic and predictions of war, with no reference to Eva, thereby not answering the question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

This was the more popular of the two questions on this text. Most recognised the structured and contrasting views of Henry in the passage, using supporting quotations. The irony in the unpleasant and immature Dauphin, deriding Henry for his “vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth” was not lost on candidates, many of whom argued successfully that King Henry was not the same as Prince Hal of his youth, often citing his considered reaction and verbal dexterity to the gift of the tennis balls received from the Dauphin. The best answers included the French King’s and Constable’s fear of Henry, exploring the language closely, in particular “You are too much mistaken” and “look you strongly arm to meet him”. The significance of their fears of conflict, and of the King himself, was supported further by the French King’s words of Henry being “crown’d with the golden sun” and “stem of that victorious stock”, leaving the audience, and candidates, without doubt that Henry is victorious by nature and lineage.

Weaker responses tended to retell the passage with some misreading and misunderstanding of context. Some candidates thought the battle had already taken place and quoted from the text without showing understanding or focus on the question.

Question 8

The best responses gave a thorough evaluation of Henry from young man to wise, Christian King, balancing comments on his cruelty, lack of compassion, but also his humility and sense of brotherhood with his men. The skill with which he gauges morale and makes his stirring motivational speech to his men was supported, often with brief, aptly selected phrases, for example, “band of brothers”. Weaker responses were character studies without comment on what there was to admire about King Henry.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

In response to this question, candidates often only worked through the passage with scant focus on the question and used Portia’s disguise to explore feminist issues during Shakespeare’s time or the homosexual implications of Bassanio and Antonio’s relationship, the latter supported by Bassanio giving away the ring as soon as Antonio “commanded” him to do so.

The strongest answers focused on the “memorable” aspect of the question and placed the passage accurately in context, following the court scene and as comic relief before the final scene at Belmont. These responses explored the humour of the passage, in the dramatic irony of Portia’s disguise and Bassanio’s comic dilemma of whether he should give the ring or not. They explored the symbolism of the ring and Bassanio’s reluctance to part with it having vowed to “neither sell, nor give, nor lose it”. They commented on

foreshadowing as a dramatic device, viewing the scene as setting up the lovers' battle to follow shortly after, when Portia questions Bassanio about his missing ring. This enhanced the drama and audience engagement as they waited to see how Bassanio would get out of it.

Weaker responses wrote what appeared to be adapted answers to this question. Portia was seen as cruel and heartless, demonstrating her true qualities, and Bassanio as breaking their marriage vow by giving away the ring and thereby proving that he really loved Antonio and only married Portia for her money. Candidates frequently misread the passage, thinking that Bassanio and Antonio's first speeches were to each other so Antonio was "indebted" to him and pledged "love and service...evermore", therefore declaring his love for Bassanio. In addition, weaker responses misread that the ring was deemed worthless as it was "a trifle", while others simplistically commented on the fact that it was "the dearest ring in Venice" therefore Bassanio could not give it away, without any deeper understanding of what the ring signifies.

Question 10

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates could select appropriate material and were able to use very detailed references to support their comments. The best responses addressed the "striking" aspect of the question and evaluated the risks and their dramatic impact on other characters and the audience, understanding that risks have consequences. The greatest risk chosen was Antonio risking his life against his ships returning to port, for Bassanio, a spendthrift and undeserving recipient of the money. Other risks explored included the caskets, Portia's disguising herself as Balthazar, Jessica risking losing her people to marry a Christian and Shylock's risk of being further ostracised in refusing to accept anything less than his "bond" from Antonio. The most successful answers were able to explore these risks and their "striking part" in the play to understand, for example, that without the caskets, Bassanio would not have needed the money or Antonio the loan. Some candidates commented on Jessica's escape with Lorenzo, a Christian, which incited further hatred and determination in Shylock to obtain his "pound of flesh". Weaker responses were narrative in approach, re-telling the plot and listing risks without consideration of the outcomes of the risk-taking.