

# ENGLISH LITERATURE

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**Paper 0477/01**  
**Paper 1 Poetry and Prose**

## **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.

**Section B: Prose**

**CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer At Ease***

**Question 5**

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 6**

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 7**

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 8**

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 9**

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 10

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 11

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 12

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 13

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 14

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 15**

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 16**

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 17**

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 18**

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

# ENGLISH LITERATURE

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**Paper 0477/02**  
**Paper 2 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.

There were few rubric infringements but candidates need to be reminded that they cannot answer two passage-based or two discursive questions. Candidates also need to number their questions 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 generally divided their time between the two questions successfully. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A: Shakespeare**

##### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V***

###### **Question 1**

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 2**

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 3**

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 4

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.

#### Section B: Drama

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

#### Question 5

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 6

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 7

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 8

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 9

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 10

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.

# ENGLISH LITERATURE

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**Paper 0477/03**  
**Paper 3 Unseen Comparison**

## **Key messages**

- All the Assessment Objectives for this syllabus are tested in this paper, and the first four are equally weighted
- Many candidates addressed AO1 and AO3 very well indeed: there was detailed textual reference and comprehensive comment on language, structure and form
- Context is an assessment focus for this paper and should be viewed as part of AO2: Candidates need to plan their response to incorporate contextual ways of comparing the writers' choice of subject and the implicit meaning of the texts
- Comparison is intrinsic to the task and is part of AO4: comparison should be interwoven within an overall interpretative argument
- The bullet points are intended to assist a focused response to language and structure followed by personal and interpretative evaluation of the texts.

## **General Comments**

Unseen practical criticism is increasingly recognised as a key test of a student's literary critical skill. The unseen comparison offered by this new syllabus fulfils the requirements of 9–1 English Literature GCSE as prescribed by the regulator and prepares candidates for the comparative tasks central to Pre U, the new A level specifications and the ELAT. Like a number of unseen papers at those higher levels, the paper gives time and space to the exercise of comparative analysis and evaluation. Candidates are not constricted by the need to address particular assessment objectives according to certain percentages, as the assessment objectives are weighted equally and the marking is holistic. Nor are they required to fit their interpretation of the unseen text around the need to compare with a taught text. They are free to develop arguments and construct a context for comparison based on their own ideas, and the direction given by the question and bullet points.

The candidates in this first series were clearly well prepared and the quality of responses was high, with some outstanding and individual readings of the texts and many thorough, clear and well-developed answers. Some would be better if more attention were paid to AO2 and AO4, as well as AO1 and AO3. Most answers showed excellent knowledge of the text with plenty of supporting quotations, mostly brief and purposeful. Many were highly adept in detailed analysis of the effects of language, structure and style, using sophisticated literary terminology accurately and purposefully. Effective contextualisation, a requirement of the syllabus, was more unusual, and should be a focus for improvement. This can be seen as an extension of AO2 (understanding of deeper implications in 0486 Paper 4). Context in this syllabus is not historical, social or biographical but 'its relatedness to other texts in immediate juxtaposition with it'. It can also be the interweaving of the context in which the text is written and that within which it is received. It is therefore intrinsic to the comparative nature of the task, and candidates should reflect on why the texts were written, and why they are set alongside one another. The question, supported by bullet points, should help with this. Candidates need to respond to the meaning of texts at more than the surface level of description.

AO4 is personal response to the task and is based around the management of comparison. It is therefore linked to AO2 as well as AO3. Candidates need to compare ideas and attitudes as well as language and structure, and comparison should drive interpretation and evaluation of the texts, based on differences as well as similarities. Comparison can take different forms: some chose to look closely at one text before making comparisons with the second text, while others sustained interwoven comparison throughout their answers, comparing aspects of language, structure and form. Both approaches are valid; the less successful

method is to withhold comparison until after looking at each text, as such comparison is likely to be rushed and superficial. What is important is that comparative analysis should be linked to the meaning of each text, and should support a critical evaluation. Thoughtful introductory overviews, perhaps introducing a context for comparison, are much more effective than statements of intent which simply paraphrase the question, or lists of literary devices employed by the writers. The construction of a convincing argument, responsive to the writer's craft and aware of the art behind a text's surfaces, is the hallmark of critical understanding and sustained personal engagement. Thus analysis needs to be judicious and selective rather than exhaustive, and should lead to a considered conclusion.

The question is designed to encourage these skills. **Question 1** made explicit reference to the snail's journey in order to imply that there was more to the narrative of both texts than its surface meaning, and that both texts had an end point. **Question 2** made it clear that both prose extracts came from the beginning of short stories, so their descriptions of settings and character and their creation of mood has a purpose, as they are starting points. Remarkably few responses made explicit reference to these elements of the questions. The bullet points guide candidates towards comparisons of language and structure, but the final bullet point normally assists evaluation and personal response, and gives candidates encouragement to step back and reach conclusions about their observations.

If all the skills of literary criticism are tested in the unseen comparative essay, it is axiomatic that a good response is also a well-written response. It is therefore quite appropriate to assess AO5 here. It was notable that the strongest essays often also had strong AO5 marks. The performance descriptors in the mark scheme stress the wide range of vocabulary and the effective control of meaning, rather than simply accuracy of spelling and punctuation. In fact, the overall quality of AO5 was generally high. Accurate paragraphing was almost universal, and sentence construction was sound. High level scripts stood out for their imaginative or sophisticated vocabulary and the deployment of a range of punctuation choices to assist purposeful expression.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

The poems 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn and 'The Snail' by William Kean Seymour proved popular among candidates, who may have been attracted by the compact size of the poems, the clear points of comparison and the interesting differences of style, structure and viewpoint. While Poem B offered many interesting features of descriptive language in its evocation of the snail's slow journey from dusk to dawn, Poem A is more elusive and its meaning is more dependent on the poet himself observing the snail's movement through 'a wood of desire' and contemplating its purpose. Candidates who contextualised the depictions of the snail effectively considered: the relationship between man and nature; the purpose of small creatures normally seen as weak or repulsive; the resilience and persistence of both snails; what their determination to achieve their goals might represent; the power and even magnificence invested in the apparently insignificant; and the contrast between the strength of one snail and the beauty of the other. Some pointed out that one snail appears to be in an exotic setting close to a beach and is far more colourful than the common garden snail observed in Poem A. Poem B foregrounds the gem-like beauty of the snail's shell, whereas Poem A's snail looks more like a slug. His makes a 'bright path' but leave only a 'thin trail of broken white'. Stronger scripts used the suggestions in the bullet points to explore descriptions of the snails' trails and different accounts of 'deliberate progress', fraught with obstacle but 'gravely intent' towards their source of 'viscous joy'. Both texts apparently see the snails as on a mission, hunting or 'trekking' towards an 'oasis'. One poet overtly questions the snail's purpose, while the other lyrically hymns his accomplishment.

All these observations made by strong candidates provided effective context for comparison and suggested deeper implications behind the descriptions. What was not necessary was to attempt to date the poems or suggest any particular historical context. Nor were ingenious allegorical or moral readings necessarily required. However, there were interesting interpretations which saw the humble snails as eco-warriors fighting for the primacy of nature in a predominantly urban world, or looked at them as nature in a microcosm, battling heroically for food and survival. Certainly both poems address the stubborn power of instinct. A few suggested that Poem B's rather aristocratic snail carrying the frail 'house of his abiding' while flaunting his 'azure, pearl and amber' contrasted with the more furious snail of Poem A, powerfully at work but socially excluded. Some, not implausibly, thought the snail of Poem A represented a sexual desire, whose 'slow passion' could not be denied, in contrast to the more effete and satisfied snail of Poem B 'perched high in leafage where the young sap sings'. All of these interpretations are potentially valid, if properly supported by supporting textual reference and analysis. What is important is to have an interpretation, or to work towards one.

Most candidates addressed AO1 and AO3 very effectively indeed. They quoted extensively from both texts, usually succinctly and with purpose. Quotation was generally followed by analytical commentary. Most had something effective to say about enjambment and caesura, realising that the poems worked in very different ways both rhythmically and in terms of sound effects. Some of the interpretations of the different effects of 'open' and 'closed' forms of verse were a little far-fetched, but the more plausible comments on form linked it closely to the ways in which the poets saw the snail's journeys. One poet sees the journey as a continuous push toward the darkness, while the other enumerates different stages of progress from darkness towards light. Some very good answers picked up the imagery of darkness and light, encouraged by the very brief rider to each text. Many commented on the precious colours of the second snail, reiterated at the poem's close as day dawns, and most compared the 'bright path' to the 'path of silver. Some saw the imagery of the second poem as proof that this poet valued the snail more highly than someone who depicts his snail, despite his 'purpose', as 'pale', 'broken' and 'knowing nothing'. Others placed the heaviest emphasis on the rhetorical question which interrupts the snail's progress in Poem A: 'What is a snail's fury?' and compared the poet's own presence in this poem to his absence in Poem B. They asked themselves what Poem B explains about the snail's life, 'glistening' yet 'frail', 'advancing' yet 'shrinking'. In contrast, Poet A asks his own questions, baffled by the 'power' of the snail and representing it as a glimmer of passion and power in the darkness which he does not fully understand, and never clearly distinguished as either creative or destructive.

The quality of analysis of language was often exceptionally high. Though gratuitous use of technical terminology is often unhelpful if unsupported and unexplained, here terms such as asyndeton, polysyndeton, alliteration, metaphor, anaphora and polyptoton were often used accurately and explained effectively. Less effective were stand-alone paragraphs on verse form, rhyme scheme or rhythm considered separately from meaning. Form is best considered in close proximity to purpose. Similarly language and structure are best considered together, and illustrated by short quotations and commentary on effects. The identification of literary devices is not credited without comment on their impact.

The variety of observations and interpretations made for effective responses in general. Several candidates said they had not thought about snails in that way before, and some provided new and fresh ways of approaching the poems. Many candidates had the confidence, at the end of their critical appreciation, to make an evaluative judgment of their own about each poem and about their relative merits. Here, once again, examiners were not looking for a 'right answer' but were interested in the reasoning behind a candidate's choices and opinions.

## Question 2

The comparison of the two prose extracts, from 'The Heart of the Heart of the Country' by William Gass and 'The Things They Carried' by Tim O'Brien, proved a less popular choice. Candidates should be equally prepared for both prose and poetry unseen work, as the skills of analysis of narrative are also important for candidates to acquire. The complex and unusual structure of both texts may have made them unappealing for candidates, though this was sometimes the starting point for interesting comparison and contrast. One looks like a prose poem, or a diary, with a series of sub-headings. The other looks like a list. One is highly subjective, the other superficially objective. However both communicate a clear viewpoint, both are the openings of short stories, introducing characters and settings, and both are broadly within the same genre, with an underlying note of irony. There are some similarities of context, as both describe displacement, and some contrasts as one speaker is in 'retirement' to rural winter, while the young platoon are deployed on active service in a jungle setting. The narrator of the first extract wants to put his past behind him – 'what good is it now to me' – while the second is looking back retrospectively at a traumatic experience surrounded by mines, with suppressed emotion behind the military jargon. There are three references to the fact that Ted Lavender was scared and that later he was shot.

A range of these points were made by stronger responses to this comparison, but drawing them together makes the purpose of the comparison more evident. Few responses took the question as their starting point and asked how these pieces worked as openings of short stories, making readers curious to find out more about characters and experiences and drawing them into unusual settings. Those that did gave their answers direction, and were able to make interesting comparisons and contrasts. Many candidates used the bullet points to structure an effective response, and realised there was plenty to compare in texts that are at least superficially very different. They found they could choose from a range of potential contexts, and some looked at the patriarchal nature of these seemingly masculine texts, or saw both narrators as discomfited and out of place.

Most candidates were very effective at identifying tone and features of the writing but less effective at linking observations to the overall meaning of each text, and there was a tendency to get distracted by the urge to work out historical context, which is not part of the assessment. More effective contexts are literary, stylistic and experiential. Some successfully explored the ways in which the reader is engaged through the mysteries embodied in the text, such as the strange nature of the men's 'necessities', or the reason for their preoccupation with the weight of what they carried. The diversity of the passages was certainly interesting to candidates, who appeared to enjoy contrasting their style and structure. The diverse and slightly comic characters in Extract B seemed all the more out-of-place in the jungle because of their incongruous possessions, while Billy Holsclaw seemed at home in his 'warped and weathered' environment, both faded and ancient. Good responses were able to hear the rhythms of the prose and noticed the very effective deployment of short sentences in both extracts. Some expressed concern about the apparent emotional detachment of both narrators and found the objectivity of their descriptions faintly ominous or disturbing. However, many struggled with the length and structure of the passages and with drawing conclusions from their observations. Many engaged with the humour of Billy Holsclaw's dishevelled appearance, the laconic voice of the narrator of Extract A and the ironies of 'necessities' which seemed anything but, while nevertheless bringing out the individuality and vulnerability of the young soldiers.

The strongest scripts were able to sustain a clear comparative element throughout, rather than treating the passage separately, focusing either on the culture revealed in the two passages or on the writer's different techniques and styles. Some contrasted the poetic elements of the first passage, beginning with its initial jokey invocation, to the statistics and operational abbreviations of the second. The strongest were marked out by their ability to draw their observations towards a conclusion, whether about the different ways in which the writers attract readers' attention and draw them into the story, or the sadness behind these apparently humorous descriptions of isolation and estrangement.

A few particularly strong scripts contrasted the compressed, taut expression of the soldiers' life with the more expansive expression which conveys the freedom and liberation sensed by the narrator of Extract A. Others found them 'intrinsically linked through their overarching themes of loss, and searching'. These candidates went on to find in both a sense of conflict which leads a person to question their existence. They found in the juxtaposition of both narratives a distinct refusal of empathy, tainted by 'an acute sense of loss' and of a 'natural order being abandoned'. It is the distinctiveness, commitment and ambition of such responses which allowed candidates to reach the higher bands