

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

<p><b>Paper 0992/12</b> <b>Poetry and Prose 12</b></p>
--

## Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- Show a clear understanding of the deeper implications of texts.
- Select relevant material that answers the question.
- Integrates apt textual references to support their ideas.
- Explore sensitively ways in which writers achieve their effects.
- Write informed personal responses to texts.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- Show only a basic grasp of surface meanings.
- Work through ‘themes’ they have studied without focusing on the key words of the question.
- Use long quotations or a list of shorter quotations without comment on specific words.
- Log writing devices without exploring the effects created.
- Are overly dependent on explanation and assertion.

## General comments

There was evidence of outstanding work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where the most successful candidates showed insight and individuality in their engagement with the poems and the questions set on them. There were some examples of candidates who spent too much time on their first response, which adversely affected their performance across the paper. Most candidates were familiar with the layout of the paper, though there were examples of candidates answering several questions rather than two. There were instances, too, of candidates relying exclusively on the extracts printed in the prose passage-based questions when answering the prose general essay questions. Centres should ensure that their candidates turn up to the exam with an understanding of the question paper’s layout and rubric. Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting; this is essential in communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners, and it is important that teachers remind candidates about this.

The strongest responses showed the ability of candidates to select relevant material for the question that had been set. This is an essential aspect of the examination: questions should not be seen as mere prompts for candidates to unload all information they know about the poem or character or theme mentioned in the question. The strongest responses to poetry and passage-based questions showed that candidates selected their material judiciously whereas in less effective responses candidates wrote exhaustively as they worked their way through a poem or passage.

Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. This is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Some candidates wrote a brief plan before starting their answer, and this often led to a more clearly organised response. Those candidates who offered lengthy introductions, with extraneous biographical or social context material, simply delayed the actual beginning of their answer to the question. Some candidates were determined to state a writer’s themes at the start of their answers and occasionally during their answer even when this was not relevant to the question that had been asked. Some opening paragraphs included sentences which simply listed in a random way the devices the writer uses, which is not a productive way of beginning a response.

The most convincing personal responses embedded textual references to support the points being made. It was clear that many candidates had learned much direct quotation to use in answering the prose general essay questions. This not only provided support and evidence but also gave candidates the opportunity to explore ways in which writers achieve their effects. The least successful responses to prose general questions included insufficient textual detail and an over-dependence on unsupported assertion. Candidates should be reminded that there is little merit in simply copying out long quotations or a list of short quotations. Some candidates adopted a misguided approach when directing Examiners to specific lines in poems and passages without making it clear which word or phrase was being referred to. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide the specific supporting detail from the text, and not simply line references. Another misguided approach could be seen in the use of ellipses in the middle of quotations which left out the actual word(s) that would support the point being made. The use of concise quotations containing the actual words that support points is more effective.

The most successful responses showed a confident and sustained analysis of ways in which writers use form, structure and language to convey their ideas. Less successful responses, particularly to poetry, simply logged features without close analysis of *precise* ways in which writers use these devices to create *specific* effects. The most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesurae, with broad comments made about an increase in, or slowing down of, the pace of a poem, though with no specific example given to support the general comment. Similarly, rhyme schemes were often said to aid the flow (or not) of the writing though without specific illustration.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

The most successful responses offered detailed analysis of the rich language and showed appreciation of how Thomas makes the poem moving. Candidates acknowledged the desolate mood and the isolated setting of the 'bleak hut' in the relentless rain. There was often sensitive response to the image of 'myriads of broken reeds', with some candidates suggesting the soldiers were 'broken' even before death, in terms of their physical and psychological resilience. Many candidates asserted that the rain represented bullets and washed soldiers clean of their sins and that the reeds represented dead bodies, though not always with careful exploration of the precise effects of Thomas's use of language. The least successful responses worked their way through the poem, explaining rather than analysing, with little focus on the key word 'moving'.

#### **Question 2**

The most successful responses focused on the key words 'disturbing impressions of the city', commenting on the rigidity of the design, the relentlessness of the building and the removal of any vestige of the past. Many candidates observed that the 'flaws and blemishes' are actually valuable 'fossils' and 'history'. There was much sensitive analysis of language, with candidates exploring the personification of the sea and sky and the extended metaphor of dental surgery, linked to the disturbing impression of the pristine and synthetic appearance of the city after treatment. The impact of the planners' activities on the development of the city is relevant to the question, though some candidates wrote almost exclusively about Cheng's presentation of the planners, with little or no focus on 'disturbing impressions of the city'.

#### **Question 3**

The most successful responses explored the ways in which Wyatt strikingly conveys his feelings, which is what the question asks for. These responses explored confidently Wyatt's use of antithesis, the paradoxical final line of the poem and the language of pain, suffering and death. Some candidates appreciated the wit and wry self-awareness of the poet. Some less confident responses were able to acknowledge the poet's inner turmoil and inability to achieve a settled state of mind, though without a focus on the key words of the question: 'strikingly conveys'. Some candidates took as their starting point biographical information rather than the actual question, often becoming side-tracked by digressions and assertions about the poet's affair with Anne Boleyn.

#### Question 4

In the strongest responses, there was a sustained engagement with the brutality of the speaker and his enjoyment in the violent act, evident in the word ‘chuckling’. There was much sensitive exploration of language, for example, with the wild animal motif suggested by ‘claws’, contrasting with the younger self’s innocence (and perhaps cowardice). Some candidates argued that the snakeskin simile symbolised a necessary shedding of childish romanticism and naivety. Some responded convincingly to the effects created by the nursery rhyme metre, comical tone and the references to Shakespearean comedy. The least successful responses were explanatory rather than analytical and took the murder literally.

#### Question 5

Most candidates showed an overall understanding of the poem’s content, including the setting: the darkness of the night, the silence of the room and the solitariness of the poet. Stronger responses explored the extended metaphor of the fox, its gradual and delicate approach representing the emergence of the poet’s ideas. There was sensitive exploration of the phrase ‘A fox’s nose touches twig, leaf’ and of the fox’s growing confidence in ‘And now, and now, and now’. Most candidates recognised both the suggestion that the ideas are outside the poet’s control and the power with which the ideas suddenly take hold. Less convincing responses digressed into generalised comments on punctuation or enjambment without linking specific points to the ideas in the poem and the key words of the question.

#### Question 6

The most successful answers selected relevant material without trying to write exhaustively about a relatively long poem. These responses focused on different aspects of the ‘early morning walk’ and the key words of the question ‘powerfully depict’. There was a detailed appreciation of the speaker’s sense of awe at the sight of these huge, still and silent creatures, with close attention paid to the description of them both before and after sunrise. The strongest responses explored the transformation that takes place at sunrise as the world comes alive, from the ‘grey silent world’ to ‘the sun (which)/Orange, red, red erupted’, the latter image being seen variously as beautiful or apocalyptic. These responses often engaged with the significance of the final two stanzas where the speaker resolves to draw upon the experience of this walk, its beauty and timelessness, in future years. The least successful responses worked through the poem in a narrative way, leaving insufficient time to explore the speaker’s walk after sunrise.

#### Question 7

Most candidates grasped the dramatic contrast in mood before and after the phone rang: the happiness of life at Auntie Ifeoma’s, the silent absorption in the card game, the laughter, followed by the abruptness of the phone ringing and Auntie Ifeoma’s scream. The most successful responses explored precise ways in which Adichie achieves her dramatic effects: the description of the scream and Kambili’s hand shaking and ears filling with liquid. Many commented on the dramatic transformation of a more assertive Kambili ‘grasp(ing)’ the phone and the implications of Mama’s voice described as ‘sound(ing) like a recording’. Less convincing responses worked through the extract paraphrasing its content and asserting that aspects were ‘dramatic’ without explaining why. Explaining why the moment in the extract is dramatic will necessarily require reference to elsewhere in the text. There were, however, many unproductive approaches that veered away from the question in the direction of pre-learned themes.

#### Question 8

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

#### Question 9

The most convincing answers offered personal and evaluative engagement with the humour of the extract in response to the key word ‘entertaining’, commenting that observations were from the first-person perspective of the younger and naïve Pip. There was close analysis of the language: for example, Pip and Joe as ‘fellow sufferers’; the ambiguity of the description of being brought up ‘by hand’; the irony of the word ‘Tickler’ to describe the cane; Pip’s use as a ‘connubial missile’. Comedy was seen in the idea of Mrs Gargery washing herself with a nutmeg grater and in the repetition of ‘Ram-paged’ as Joe’s description of his wife’s anger. The least effective responses tended to work through the extract in an explanatory and sometimes literal way without acknowledgement of the humour in the portrayal of the two characters. Some candidates were side-tracked by overly general comment on gender roles (‘in those days’).

### Question 10

There were few very confident responses to this question. Most candidates were able to show some understanding of the character and his contribution to the plot. There was a tendency to focus mainly on the early and terrifying introduction to Magwitch as the escaped convict on the marshes. In general, many candidates answering this question needed a more detailed knowledge of the character's role later in the novel. The ability to deploy a range of learned direct quotations would have helped to improve performance in many answers; this would have helped to provide more convincing, closely supported, responses to this 'How far?' question.

### Question 11

The best of the responses sustained personal and evaluative engagement with the question, the detail of the extract and relevant links to elsewhere in the novel. There was confident exploration of ways in which Du Maurier portrays the narrator's naivety and Maxim's fury evident in his 'ashen-white' features and brutal commands to his wife. Candidates commented on the gothic elements that contributed to the power of the moment: Maxim's 'blazed' eyes; the guests as 'dumb things; and Mrs Danvers with the 'face of an exulting devil'. The strongest responses considered the strain of the marriage, the narrator's belated understanding of Mrs Danvers' cruel manipulation and the narrator's lack of identity in the world of Manderley. There were some responses that showed only a limited knowledge of what is happening and who the characters are in the extract; Examiners observed that these responses shared characteristics of unseen responses.

### Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 13

The most successful responses commented on all three characters in the extract. There was a clear understanding of the role of Townsend: his easy manipulation of Catherine; his 'light and breezy' manner; his proprietorial look around the room; the portrayal of him as a kind of predator on a fact-finding mission. There was often a less convincing response to Mrs Penniman, with some candidates taking her words at face value. The least successful responses provided general character sketches without analysing the 'ways (in which) James strikingly portrays' the characters. Some candidates would have benefited from making greater use of the detail of the extract printed for them in answering this question.

### Question 14

Most candidates attempted a balanced response to this 'To what extent?' question. It should be noted that balance is not a requirement; candidates are free to take whatever line they wish, so long as they inform their responses with support from the text. Some answers referred to the more implacable parts of his nature evident in his protection of his daughter and his forbidding manner, though lack of direct quotation led to overly assertive arguments. Some candidates asserted that Sloper's discouragement of his daughter's marriage to Townsend was a clear-cut illustration of his not caring for his daughter, disregarding the evidence the text provides of Townsend's unsuitability.

### Question 15

The strongest responses sustained a focus on the key word 'revealing', commenting on the deterioration of the relationship and Gogol's apparent cluelessness. Candidates explored the contrast between what the relationship had been like in the past with its troubling state now, with focus on the tensions showing that the relationship is beginning to disintegrate and has no future. Moushumi's preference that Gogol did not attend the presentation was often seen as a revealing turning point in their relationship, as was Gogol's feelings of abandonment as he roams around Paris alone. The least successful responses tended to re-tell the content of the extract and lacked an awareness of how the extract fitted into the overall novel, such as the foreshadowing of future events.

### Question 16

Successful responses showed an understanding of how Ashoke assimilated into American culture whilst still retaining as much Bengali culture as possible. They showed an appreciation of the accident as a turning point in his life, leading him to the naming of his son Gogol in gratitude. Most candidates referred to the arranged marriage, the mutual loyalty and respect of the married couple and the importance to Ashoke of his

successful working life. Less effective responses tended to ignore the importance of the character's back story and lacked a sufficiently wide range of textual references to support their responses. In the least successful responses, the focus was lost, with candidates writing more about Gogol than Ashoke.

### Question 17

In the most successful responses, there was an appreciation of how Edith's lack of intelligence was the basis for amusement because of her seeming lack of understanding of the seriousness of the event. Lindsay's use of humour was explored in Edith's interactions with Bumper and his frustrated endeavours to ascertain information from her. Many commented on her misunderstanding of the questions, the mixture of irrelevant and important information, and the slapstick comedy of the sandwich. These successful responses explored the significance of the red cloud and of the sacred nature of the rock and how this added to the foolishness of Edith's comments. Most grasped the difficulty Edith faces in discussing a teacher in a state of undress. The least successful responses did not engage with the humour of the extract and simply worked their way through the extract explaining content. Some candidates used the extract as a starting point for an extended digression on the position of women in colonial or Victorian times, thereby losing a close focus on the key words of the question.

### Question 18

This was a significantly less popular question than the extract question on the text. Stronger responses pointed to the significance of Sara's artistic talent and its lack of value owing to the school's narrow ethos. These answers explored the pathos of both her orphan status and the discovery of her death, together with the motivations behind Mrs Appleyard's cruel behaviour towards her. Some commented on the significance of her relationship with Miranda and the impact of her loss on Sara. Less successful responses showed a lack of detailed knowledge relevant to the question and, rather than focusing on the character's contribution to 'the power of the novel', offered simple and general character sketches.

### Question 19

The most successful responses addressed the key word 'excitement' with examples from the extract of how Pi reacted to this new emotion. They commented closely on Pi's attempts to survive, charting his mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing, using well-selected references for support. There was much detailed and sensitive exploration of the use of sound, repetition, listing, capitalisation and rhetorical questions in the extract. The strongest responses captured Pi's excitement at taming Richard Parker and explored the metaphorical implication that Richard Parker represents the animalistic side of Pi himself. Less successful responses tended to describe Pi's excitement rather than engage with Martel's methods in 'strikingly conveying' that excitement. Some candidates lacked familiarity with the extract and thought there was an actual circus ring rather than Pi imagining one.

### Question 20

Candidates were generally able to acknowledge Pi's terror of being alone with a tiger, his mental anguish of losing a family and the continual struggles to find food and water. There were few answers which provided specific textual evidence to address the key words 'extreme' and 'suffering' with the result that there was a tendency to narrate events without a clear focus on the question. Candidates generally needed a wider range of direct quotations on key aspects of the text which can be used to support points and analyse a writer's use of language, here, in 'vividly depict(ing) Pi's extreme suffering'.

### Question 21

The strongest responses addressed the key phrase 'unhappiness at this moment' with careful use of well-selected references. They explored Mr Shi's unhappiness as rooted in his own behaviour, such as his inability or unwillingness to adapt culturally, in relation to the issue of divorce and what many regarded as his unreasonable expectations of his daughter. Reference was made to the significance of the titular proverb and to his envy of Madam who, in contrast to him, finds communication easy. In explaining Mr Shi's unhappiness at this moment in the story, the strongest responses referred to other parts of the story that help provide an explanation: Mr Shi's unhappy marriage a result of his lies; his reaction to his daughter's phone call. The least successful responses tended to adopt a narrative approach, taking at face value Mr Shi's words in the extract, without understanding the context provided by the rest of the story.

## Question 22

The most convincing responses showed a personal and evaluative engagement with the key words ‘vivid impressions’, commenting on the character being strong, kind, maternal and protective. There was close attention to textual detail which subverts the expectations of both Roger and the reader, with many candidates reflecting on how first impressions can be mistaken and how Mrs Jones’ response to the attempted theft turns out to be more empathetic than might be expected from her initial fearless apprehension of Roger. The least successful answers showed only a basic, general understanding of the story, lacking the detailed knowledge required to respond convincingly to the question’s focus on ‘ways in which Hughes creates vivid impressions’. Some responses began with a list of learned themes suggested by the story rather than attempting to address the actual question.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 0992/22  
Drama 22

## Key messages

- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, sustained the link, and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Opening paragraphs should be brief and avoid lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- In passage-based questions, successful answers briefly stated the context of the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful answers to the discursive questions maintained a sharp focus on the question and could refer to specific incidents from across the whole text.
- Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.
- An awareness of the text as drama and appreciation of the play onstage are a prerequisite of successful responses.

## General comments

Many candidates showed an extensive knowledge and demonstrated enjoyment of their set texts engaging with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on characterisation, stagecraft, mood and tone. It was pleasing to see how many candidates offered a genuine personal response to the plays, supported by detailed knowledge and apt textual support.

The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*. There was a considerable increase in candidates choosing to write on Lyn Nottage's, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. *Journey's End* remains a popular choice on the 0992 syllabus. There was one new text this series, Wole Soyinka's, *Death and the King's Horseman*, with very few responses seen. Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Candidates should be reminded that background information should be brief and relevant to the question. In answering questions on *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, lengthy introductions about the Civil Rights Movement and social and racial prejudice in the United States were unlikely to gain reward. In *Journey's End*, some candidates introduced responses with biographical notes on Sherriff, his war experience and historical facts about World War 1. Contextual background to historical plays should have some balance so simply asserting contemporary views that the men were fighting a 'futile war', and that it was portrayed as 'honourable', when we now know it was not, and that the 'men died for nothing,' is also unlikely to gain high reward. Candidates who focused on the text and the relevant points in the passage-based question, with Osborne's reference to the '*two warring parties*' being organised, and the poignant likelihood that they would not live to see another summer back home, were able to argue the case for the 'futility' of war more strongly. Similarly, in responses to *Iago*, some candidates lost focus on the character as a construct of Shakespeare and included lengthy detail about Machiavelli's, *Il Principe*, losing focus completely on the actual question.

It is essential that candidates read the question carefully and think about the implications before starting to write. It was pleasing to see an increase in candidates writing a brief plan to help them to select the most important points to include, and the most suitable material to use to support these points. When answering the passage-based question, the whole passage should be read to avoid missing key points. For example in **Question 5a** of *Othello*, many candidates missed his likely safety in the last line of (*Within: A sail, a sail, a sail!*). Successful answers wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example,

'fascinating', 'dramatic', 'striking' or 'vividly'. These were used to help them to select the most suitable material to answer the question and a link to the question was sustained throughout their answer. Less successful answers appeared to use a discussion of themes as a way of addressing the question and language; these discussions were not always relevant, tended to detract from the actual question and did not encourage a more appropriate selection of material to answer the question.

Too often, candidates wrote lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot or listing issues, including a list of the techniques the writer had used, including punctuation, which they would analyse in their answer. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. However, whilst some candidates understand and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. In an examination with 45 minutes to write a response these are unproductive ways to start an answer and there is little to reward in responses which list the range of punctuation the writer uses in the text. For example, what is an Examiner to make of comments like these in scripts: '...the use of exclamation marks makes this scene dramatic...' or '...the use of comma and semi-colon creates an almost asyndetic list as Trotter worries for Stanhope...'? The most successful answers explored the use of techniques in context to show a clear understanding of the effect achieved: for example, the use of pauses in **Question 2a** to indicate the speaker thinking about how to change the subject to a less awkward one.

Candidates need to remember that drama is visual and uses language that has an impact on an audience. The most successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as performance, referring to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. These were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts. Successful responses focused clearly on dramatic impact and how the audience were made to feel. There was successful reference to dramatic irony, foreshadowing, tone and stage directions. Candidates who focused on stage directions, and what they conveyed to the character, and watching audience, as well as the impact of asides and soliloquies were able to demonstrate greater awareness of drama. Less successful responses whilst making some valid comments on methods tended to limit the effects to, 'make the audience interested to see what happens next'. Whilst seeing a production is a valuable experience, contributing to a clearer understanding of text as performance, candidates need to remember that responses should focus on the text and not on the range of films, or live performances, they have seen. There is no requirement that they write about how they would direct scenes, how characters should deliver lines, behave or move around the stage.

Most candidates know that close reference to the text and relevant quotations are needed to support ideas to achieve highly. However, some candidates work through the extract, line by line, writing out a quotation and then offering paraphrase, sometimes followed by the statement: 'which makes it such a dramatic moment in the play', without exploring how it is made dramatic. To achieve a coherent, relevant response to the question, the argument should come first, followed by a supporting quotation, containing a link to the task. Candidates should explore language in context and not choose one or two words to analyse with little or no concept of their significance in the text. For example, in **Question 5a**, many candidates highlighted the words, 'heaven' and 'pray', devoid of any context and commented on the importance of religion and heaven and hell in Shakespeare's time, failing to understand that the reference to heaven regarded the storm preventing the speaker from seeing anything between the sky and the sea.

There were very few rubric infringements on component 2 which was pleasing to note, particularly with the change to the rubric for syllabus 2010. Where seen, these were invariably due to candidates answering on two passage-based questions instead of one passage-based question and one discursive. In these instances, both essays are marked but only the higher mark awarded. Time management was good with very few unfinished responses seen. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text and to remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of the response.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This was a very popular text and question, eliciting many sensitive and thorough responses which explored the whole passage in depth. There was much unhappiness conveyed here and the most successful responses covered a range of the causes, supporting ideas with well-selected

references and close analysis of how the writer conveyed them. Most candidates understood how Godfrey's grief at the loss of his wife, Sandra, has made him dependent on the Christian leader, Father Divine, allowing no entertainment on Sundays. This has made him wary of white people as seen in his misguided attempts to protect his daughters from visiting the Levys' because *'They white'* and by his reference to the *'Scottsboro boys'*. This has led to isolation and a lack of normal teenage entertainment for his daughters with no TV or radio to listen to at home, or by visiting the Levy's in the apartment above.

The best answers explored the stage directions and Ernestine's 'narration', breaking the fourth wall. Some argued effectively that the family's unhappiness is a result of them being unable to express their emotions: Godfrey attempts to *'restrain his sobs'* and writes in his notebook; Ermina's twitching leg indicates her repressed stress – she wants to go to the Levy's which is forbidden, and Ernestine talks to the audience giving her personal thoughts and commentary on what's happening. She is able to voice what the audience already sees: Father Divine's hypocrisy in marrying a *'spotless white virgin'*; her sarcasm at the sounds of the Levy's laughter, *'only white folk can laugh on Sunday'*; Godfrey's bribery of them with cookies rather than giving of himself; the lack of hope for the future which is always *'on the horizon'*, never *'here'*. Some were critical of Godfrey's failures as a father, ignoring the fact that he is grieving the loss of his wife and the children's mother, and trying his best as a single parent.

Less successful responses focused predominantly on racism, both the racial treatment of African-Americans and Godfrey's anti-white feelings. Too often these digressed making extraneous points about race relations and Jim Crow laws rather than focusing on the question and passage. Weaker answers worked through the passage with little focus on their 'unhappiness', believing that the Crumps did not have a radio when in fact, there is one in the flat, which remains switched off and poignantly acts as a reminder of the dead mother who won it.

- (b) This was not as popular as 1a. This question encouraged and resulted in some genuine personal responses. Responses ranged from brief character studies with little focus on what there is to admire about Lily, to detailed critical responses focusing closely on the terms of the question, *'To what extent'* does Nottage's portrayal persuade the audience to admire her. The most successful responses gave balanced views of Lily starting with her admirable qualities: her confidence and fashion choices which are empowering for the girls and her communist views in trying to stand up for workers' rights. Features of these responses were perceptive comments questioning how genuine her communism was whilst admiring her for not letting Ernestine parrot her views, encouraging her to hold her own views and to get educated. There was understanding that there was little place for a powerful black woman either in her home community or in a white dominated USA.

Lily's dramatic entrance as she burst on the scene with, *'Who? Precious. If that ain't a question! It's me,'* was noted and it soon became clear that this vibrant and glamorous figure was homeless and hungry. She was seen as admirable for standing up for Ermina as a mother-figure, straightening the girl's hair *'just like mama used to'*, someone to inspire them and for the fun she brought into their lives which contrasted sharply with Godfrey's ideas for their upbringing. Better responses moved on to explore her less admirable qualities: her alcoholism and drug-taking; untruthfulness and laziness; jealousy of Gerte and her behaviour over Ernestine's graduation dress. Godfrey's unhappiness at her presence as she mocks his new life and sobriety was also explored. Her sad demise was only mentioned in a few responses, testament for a few candidates, that overall, Nottage generated more sympathy than admiration for Lily.

Less successful responses focused on her admirable qualities in bringing laughter into the girls' lives with her drunken dancing, sexual banter and undermining of Godfrey's behaviour but without exploring both sides of the character and with little textual detail to support ideas. Some responses totally overlooked anything but the positive qualities and, if mentioned, were sympathetic of her weaknesses.

## R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 2

- (a) This was a very popular text and question with a wide range of excellent answers. The most successful responses read the question carefully and understood the focus was on how the characters were 'strikingly portrayed'.

Most candidates responded with sensitivity to Trotter and Osborne recognising the unease at the beginning of the passage and the need for coping mechanisms. They understood the context of the moment, the morning after Stanhope's heavy drinking session, referred to by Trotter in the passage. There was critical understanding of the anxiety created by the silence, the knowledge of the 'Big attack' and the dramatic impact of their different responses to the silence and to Stanhope. Their caring natures and concern for Stanhope were explored. Better responses understood the nuances of Trotter's words, arguing that he was not simply condemning or gossiping about Stanhope, lowering his voice not to be heard, but was relating his concern. The best responses recognised the change of subject which led to a brief nostalgic escape from the war as the two men shared their memories of their gardens at home. Many candidates pointed out that this made them seem 'like normal human beings just like the audience', with a life beyond the war they hoped to return to.

Most candidates recognised the role played by Osborne who listened with interest, responded encouragingly and shared Trotter's memories, allowing Trotter to enjoy his moment. Trotter's lengthy sentences, humour and use of food as a coping mechanism, with his swift change of topic from the Boche to his jam were noted. This was contrasted to Osborne's brief comments to change from awkward topics; from preparations for the raid and Stanhope's drinking to the weather and gardening. The men's use of dashes and pauses were explored effectively with some sensitive detail to the way Osborne responds to Raleigh's 'lowered head' with his brief '*Did he?*' before moving on to talk of the sun. Osborne's care of his men and his plants and Trotter calling him 'Uncle' were all selected as indications of his caring nature.

There was some close detail to the language, stage directions and the symbolic use of light and the sun, patriotism in the colour of the flowers and the cycle of life with their hopes for the summer. More perceptive answers pointed out how weak the sun was and the pathos that they are not going to see the summer sun they long for.

Whilst there was awareness of the two men's different background and social class, less successful candidates were confused about Trotter's speech and argued he 'could not speak properly' as he was of a 'lower social class', rather than specifically the fact that he drops his 'itches'. The weakest responses worked through the passage commenting on what was 'striking' about the war and dugout, rather than what the audience learns about the characters at this moment. There was confusion between the two men and their fear and anxiety were exaggerated. Some considered Trotter was a simple-minded man whose main role was to provide comic relief and could not understand why he should change from talking about the war to ask for the jam.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question but most candidates were able to engage with the relationship in detailed, personal responses. Most answers traced the friendship in a chronological manner, knew the text well and were able to identify key scenes where the relationship is clearly portrayed: Raleigh's arrival and initial conversation with Osborne; Stanhope's horror on seeing him; the censorship of the letter; the climatic scene after Osborne's death and the final scene following Raleigh's fatal injury and ultimate death. The most successful answers showed critical understanding and the dramatic impact as the hero-worshipping young boy, just out of school, arrives and is unaware of how the war has changed Stanhope. Better answers explored his enthusiastic comments about Stanhope and ironic recounting of Denis's anger at the boys' drinking at school. They explored Osborne's subtle attempts to forewarn Raleigh that Stanhope might have changed.

There was understanding of the compelling nature of the friendship and the deeper reasons for Stanhope's shock at having Raleigh join his company: his insecurity and shame at being 'found wanting'. Better answers explored the powerful moment when Osborne comforts and supports Stanhope after Raleigh's arrival, and by reading what Raleigh had written about him. His fear that Raleigh would have informed his sister, Stanhope's girlfriend, that he was an alcoholic and a monster, proved to be totally unfounded. The dramatic nature of Stanhope's language here as he demands the letter, '*Give me that letter,*' and the stage directions, '*shouting*' and '*trembling*' and at other times, were frequently highlighted.

Stanhope's powerfully dramatic reaction to Osborne's death and furious conflict with Raleigh were also effectively explored. The best answers understood Stanhope's underlying concerns for Raleigh in his attempt to prevent Raleigh going on the raid by offering to go himself, and particularly following Raleigh's fatal injury. There was some sensitive detail to their use of first

names 'Jimmy' and 'Denis', in Raleigh's final moments as it re-established the intimacy of their pre-war relationship. This was contrasted with Stanhope's previous anger at the use of his first name as he now desperately tries to keep the dying Raleigh comfortable.

Less successful answers were unable to recall specific textual details to support points. This resulted in general comments on their friendship and much retelling of the scenes where Osborne puts Stanhope to bed or calms him down when he is angry over the prospect of Raleigh informing his sister of Stanhope's drinking problem.

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

#### **Question 3**

- (a) A relatively small number of candidates answered this question. Most candidates were able to engage with Elesin's arrogance, love of women, selfishness and the extent he would go to in order to satisfy his desires. They understood the importance of keeping Elesin happy and the context of being the King's Horseman. The most successful responses condemned his love of life and the irony in him believing he was a '*man of honour*' whilst taking advantage of his position to satisfy his lustful desires. They saw the warning signs that Elesin was not ready to make his journey through ritual suicide, and Iyaloja's understanding of this. Better answers focused on the ways Soyinka made this dramatic, exploring the hyperbole in describing the woman he desires, and the women being unable to understand his poetic use of language. His manipulation of Iyaloja and her reasons for not refusing his request for her son's betrothed were understood – the catastrophic impact on the future of Yoruba society if Elesin failed in his duty. For some candidates the treatment of the young woman was the most dramatic aspect of the passage as her consent was neither sought nor given.

Less successful responses worked through the passage explaining what was happening with little focus on the dramatic nature of the moment or understanding of the language.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question but all found Simon Pilkings to be arrogant in his total disregard for the Yoruba people and culture. Candidates engaged with the terms of the question and most conveyed their hatred for his sacrilegious actions in appropriating Yoruba Egungun costume for a 'fancy dress party' to impress the prince. This was contrasted to the Yoruba King's journey to the underworld, without his Horseman, whose ritual suicide was delayed due to his arrest by Pilkings. There was some comment on his prejudiced language and disdain for Yoruba and Muslim beliefs considering them '*nonsense*' and '*mumbo-jumbo*'. Both his offensive language to describe the people as '*sly, devious bastards*' and his arrogant attitude towards his wife were strongly criticised. Better answers offered a balanced approach, respecting him for doing his duty as the British Colonial District Officer, noting his assistance to Olunde and acknowledging his misguided attempt to save a man from performing what he considered a barbaric act of suicide rather than a ceremonial death ritual.

Weaker responses gave a character study and were unaware of his job, with some thinking he was a police officer. They portrayed him as a stereotypical white racist without any personal engagement or comment on how this made them feel about him.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) This was a popular text and question and there was a wide range of work seen. Many candidates responded to this question by providing a description of Viola in the passage, rather than focusing on how her introduction is striking. Most understood that after the shipwreck, finding herself in a strange land, she has to use her wits to find employment and provide a safe future for herself.

The most successful answers considered her independent spirit, courage and confidence, as seen in her swift change of mood from being mournful over the loss of Sebastian to one of optimism for the future. Her distress was noted and stronger responses linked this more explicitly to the ideas of female assertion and Elizabethan views of women. They were able to compare Viola's and Olivia's responses to the loss of a brother and commended Viola for her down to earth and unconventional approach within Elizabethan society. Better answers understood Shakespeare's methods in setting up later events with the introduction of both Olivia and Orsino, and the idea of unrequited love.

They understood her dramatic function as she establishes the central themes of appearance versus reality and mistaken identity. Most candidates quoted Viola's words, '*Conceal me what I am*' and explored her decision to disguise herself as Cesario, commenting on the staging and the foreshadowing of later events, but without losing focus on the passage.

There was some close reference to the language and dramatic impact of the passage. The initial shipwreck provided drama with the possibility that Sebastian might be alive leading the audience to imagine the confusion should he reappear later in the play. There was close attention to Viola's inquisitive nature, her rapid questioning of the captain, and her ability to change plans quickly from initially wanting to work for Olivia to a decisive, '*I'll serve this duke*'. However, there was much confusion over her language. She was cited as speaking prose/blank verse/iambic pentameter but without any textual reference, or understanding, of the effects of the different speech patterns.

Less successful answers demonstrated some understanding of Viola's resourcefulness and optimistic character but there was a tendency to lose focus on her '*introduction*' after commenting on her plan to disguise herself, and to discuss mistaken identity in the rest of the play. There was much confusion over Sebastian's attempt to save himself by binding himself to the mast. Some thought it was Sebastian who had been seen riding away on the dolphin, and not the mythological character Arion, and that the captain had made it up to keep Viola calm.

The weakest answers wrote a character analysis starting from this point but lapsing into a simple retelling of the passage and later events. Some thought Viola was being blackmailed by the captain and paid him for his silence about her disguise. There was misunderstanding of Elysium with some thinking Sebastian had landed in another country.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question. All candidates were able to identify the importance of mistaken identity in the play, focusing on how Olivia falls in love with Cesario/Viola and Cesario/Viola falls in love with Orsino. The most successful answers discussed the intricacies of the plot and how mistaken identity played a key role in developing and resolving it. The best answers explored the deeper implications of love as a form of madness and cited a number of cases of mistaken identity including: Feste's disguise as Sir Topaz and his disguise of his intelligence; the deception of Malvolio and the dramatic irony in the fact that the audience knows that Cesario is a woman. There was some understanding of comedy as tragedy averted, with the dangers of disguise, madness and cruelty (Malvolio's treatment) just about remedied by the final marriages. There was awareness of the audience's involvement, and enjoyment of the play, through Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony.

Less successful answers struggled to focus and covered a broad range of examples of mistaken identity without consideration of the dramatic impact created. There was little textual detail to support ideas leading to some very narrative responses. The weakest answers wrote generally about Twelfth Night in the Christmas period and the concept of the Lord of Misrule then simply narrated what happened in some incidents of mistaken identity. Some focused solely on the gulling of Malvolio and tended to retell the events without linking it to the terms of the question.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was also a very popular text and there were many insightful and thorough responses. The question required candidates to comment on the power of the scene as a dramatic opening to Act 2, so reference to later events was within the terms of the question. The dramatic presentation of the storm and its intensity was well understood, as was its symbolic echo of the emotional tempest to come. However, some candidates, in focussing on this foreshadowing aspect of the storm, provided too much detail on later events, losing focus on the passage.

The most successful answers identified the context, explored the passage in detail, and were able to relate textual details of the extract to broader themes of the play. They noted how the portrayal of Othello's courage and bravery lent greater impact to his downfall, with the violence of the storm foreshadowing the violence of Othello's temper and fury later in the play. Stronger answers contrasted Iago and Brabantio's descriptions of Othello earlier in the play with his depiction here as '*warlike*', '*brave*' and '*worthy*'. They understood the dramatic impact on the men, and of the audience, awaiting Othello's arrival and fearing for his safety during the storm. Better answers explored the irony surrounding Cassio's regard for Othello in light of future events and the

knowledge that Iago intends to use him to bring down Othello. They commented on structural aspects, for example the contrast between Venice and Cyprus, the implications of the change of setting, and also in how the destruction of the Turkish fleet gives space for another kind of war to emerge. 'Well-selected textual reference' and 'close analysis of the language' were features of these answers and there were perceptive comments on the descriptive imagery of the storm and the animalistic imagery of the '*monstrous mane*'.

Less successful answers were narrative in approach, working through the events and exchanges rather than exploring the tension on stage. They struggled with the context, who these characters were and who was safe or lost at sea. Whilst they understood the raging storm and destruction of the Turkish fleet, there was some misunderstanding of the language where candidates attempted to analyse individual words, rather than in the context of the passage. Weaker answers found the language difficult and worked through the text explaining words literally, for example the '*ribs of oak*' were human ribs, likely to be destroyed in the storm, and '*His bark*' referred to Othello 'as a dog'. Consequently, there was often little to reward in these responses.

- (b) This was a popular question and candidates responded enthusiastically to Iago making clear they found him a fascinating character. Many candidates argued that he, and not Othello, was the main protagonist as he drives the plot and controls character behaviour throughout. There was audience engagement and some candidates conveyed respect for his intelligence and disdain for his victims. The most successful answers explored how he uses the insecurities of his victims and how he manages to destroy Othello's whole personality through his mastery of language, and psychological manipulation. They were able to write sensitively about his pathological jealousy and the way in which his soliloquies, asides and the dramatic irony, draw the audience into an unwanted sense of knowledge and complicity.

Many wrote about his carefully prepared plans: managing Cassio's downfall; his manipulation of Roderigo and Brabantio and his manipulation of Othello through his language and use of the handkerchief. There was insight into Iago's language and the metaphor of the spider's web and pestilence poured into Othello's ear. The most successful answers explored how the style of Othello's language seemed to echo Iago's as the play progresses reducing him to brutish and monosyllabic: '*O, blood, blood, blood!*'. Iago's motives were discussed but better answers argued that these were unbelievable as motivation for Iago's campaign to destroy Othello. The strongest candidates concluded his lack of clear motivation remains a mystery and adds to Iago's fascination. They cited his refusal to speak at the end as evidence that Iago himself had no justification for his campaign to destroy Othello.

A few less successful answers used prepared character studies of Iago which would have benefitted from closer links to the question and the ways in which Shakespeare makes him such a fascinating character. Nevertheless, they were able to describe some of the incidents orchestrated by Iago, as well as possible reasons for his behaviour. Some used just two quotations, '*Honest Iago*' and '*I am not what I am*' and referenced Coleridge's 'motiveless malignity' but without exploring them further. Candidates who lost focus on Iago and wrote about Machiavellian schemes were often self-penalising. In the weakest answers, Iago was simply a baddie, evil to the core and the devil himself, though they were unable to support this with close reference to the text.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

**Paper 0992/32 (Open Text)**  
**Drama 32**

## Key messages

- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, sustained the link, and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Opening paragraphs should be brief and avoid lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- In passage-based questions, successful answers briefly stated the context of the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful answers to the discursive questions maintained a sharp focus on the question and could refer to specific incidents from across the whole text.
- Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.
- An awareness of the text as drama and appreciation of the play onstage are a prerequisite of successful responses.

## General comments

Many candidates showed an extensive knowledge and demonstrated enjoyment of their set texts engaging with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on characterisation, stagecraft, mood and tone. It was pleasing to see how many candidates offered a genuine personal response to the plays, supported by detailed knowledge and apt textual support.

The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*. There was a considerable increase in candidates choosing to write on Lyn Nottage's, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. *Journey's End* remains a popular choice on the 0992 syllabus. There was one new text this series, Wole Soyinka's, *Death and the King's Horseman*, with very few responses seen. Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Candidates should be reminded that background information should be brief and relevant to the question. In answering questions on *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, lengthy introductions about the Civil Rights Movement and social and racial prejudice in the United States were unlikely to gain reward. In *Journey's End*, some candidates introduced responses with biographical notes on Sherriff, his war experience and historical facts about World War 1. Contextual background to historical plays should have some balance so simply asserting contemporary views that the men were fighting a 'futile war', and that it was portrayed as 'honourable', when we now know it was not, and that the 'men died for nothing,' is also unlikely to gain high reward. Candidates who focused on the text and the relevant points in the passage-based question, with Osborne's reference to the '*two warring parties*' being organised, and the poignant likelihood that they would not live to see another summer back home, were able to argue the case for the 'futility' of war more strongly. Similarly, in responses to *Iago*, some candidates lost focus on the character as a construct of Shakespeare and included lengthy detail about Machiavelli's, *Il Principe*, losing focus completely on the actual question.

It is essential that candidates read the question carefully and think about the implications before starting to write. It was pleasing to see an increase in candidates writing a brief plan to help them to select the most important points to include, and the most suitable material to use to support these points. When answering the passage-based question, the whole passage should be read to avoid missing key points. For example in **Question 5a** of *Othello*, many candidates missed his likely safety in the last line of (*Within: A sail, a sail, a sail!*). Successful answers wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example,

'fascinating', 'dramatic', 'striking' or 'vividly'. These were used to help them to select the most suitable material to answer the question and a link to the question was sustained throughout their answer. Less successful answers appeared to use a discussion of themes as a way of addressing the question and language; these discussions were not always relevant, tended to detract from the actual question and did not encourage a more appropriate selection of material to answer the question.

Too often, candidates wrote lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot or listing issues, including a list of the techniques the writer had used, including punctuation, which they would analyse in their answer. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. However, whilst some candidates understand and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. In an examination with 45 minutes to write a response these are unproductive ways to start an answer and there is little to reward in responses which list the range of punctuation the writer uses in the text. For example, what is an Examiner to make of comments like these in scripts: '...the use of exclamation marks makes this scene dramatic...' or '...the use of comma and semi-colon creates an almost asyndetic list as Trotter worries for Stanhope...'? The most successful answers explored the use of techniques in context to show a clear understanding of the effect achieved: for example, the use of pauses in **Question 2a** to indicate the speaker thinking about how to change the subject to a less awkward one.

Candidates need to remember that drama is visual and uses language that has an impact on an audience. The most successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as performance, referring to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. These were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts. Successful responses focused clearly on dramatic impact and how the audience were made to feel. There was successful reference to dramatic irony, foreshadowing, tone and stage directions. Candidates who focused on stage directions, and what they conveyed to the character, and watching audience, as well as the impact of asides and soliloquies were able to demonstrate greater awareness of drama. Less successful responses whilst making some valid comments on methods tended to limit the effects to, 'make the audience interested to see what happens next'. Whilst seeing a production is a valuable experience, contributing to a clearer understanding of text as performance, candidates need to remember that responses should focus on the text and not on the range of films, or live performances, they have seen. There is no requirement that they write about how they would direct scenes, how characters should deliver lines, behave or move around the stage.

Most candidates know that close reference to the text and relevant quotations are needed to support ideas to achieve highly. However, some candidates work through the extract, line by line, writing out a quotation and then offering paraphrase, sometimes followed by the statement: 'which makes it such a dramatic moment in the play', without exploring how it is made dramatic. To achieve a coherent, relevant response to the question, the argument should come first, followed by a supporting quotation, containing a link to the task. Candidates should explore language in context and not choose one or two words to analyse with little or no concept of their significance in the text. For example, in **Question 5a**, many candidates highlighted the words, 'heaven' and 'pray', devoid of any context and commented on the importance of religion and heaven and hell in Shakespeare's time, failing to understand that the reference to heaven regarded the storm preventing the speaker from seeing anything between the sky and the sea.

Time management was good with very few unfinished responses seen. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text and to remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of the response.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This was a very popular text and question, eliciting many sensitive and thorough responses which explored the whole passage in depth. There was much unhappiness conveyed here and the most successful responses covered a range of the causes, supporting ideas with well-selected references and close analysis of how the writer conveyed them. Most candidates understood how Godfrey's grief at the loss of his wife, Sandra, has made him dependent on the Christian leader, Father Divine, allowing no entertainment on Sundays. This has made him wary of white people as seen in his misguided attempts to protect his daughters from visiting the Levys' because 'They

*white*' and by his reference to the '*Scottsboro boys*'. This has led to isolation and a lack of normal teenage entertainment for his daughters with no TV or radio to listen to at home, or by visiting the Levy's in the apartment above.

The best answers explored the stage directions and Ernestine's 'narration', breaking the fourth wall. Some argued effectively that the family's unhappiness is a result of them being unable to express their emotions: Godfrey attempts to '*restrain his sobs*' and writes in his notebook; Ermina's twitching leg indicates her repressed stress – she wants to go to the Levy's which is forbidden, and Ernestine talks to the audience giving her personal thoughts and commentary on what's happening. She is able to voice what the audience already sees: Father Divine's hypocrisy in marrying a '*spotless white virgin*'; her sarcasm at the sounds of the Levy's laughter, '*only white folk can laugh on Sunday*'; Godfrey's bribery of them with cookies rather than giving of himself; the lack of hope for the future which is always '*on the horizon*', never '*here*'. Some were critical of Godfrey's failures as a father, ignoring the fact that he is grieving the loss of his wife and the children's mother, and trying his best as a single parent.

Less successful responses focused predominantly on racism, both the racial treatment of African-Americans and Godfrey's anti-white feelings. Too often these digressed making extraneous points about race relations and Jim Crow laws rather than focusing on the question and passage. Weaker answers worked through the passage with little focus on their 'unhappiness', believing that the Crumps did not have a radio when in fact, there is one in the flat, which remains switched off and poignantly acts as a reminder of the dead mother who won it.

- (b) This was not as popular as 1a. This question encouraged and resulted in some genuine personal responses. Responses ranged from brief character studies with little focus on what there is to admire about Lily, to detailed critical responses focusing closely on the terms of the question, '*To what extent*' does Nottage's portrayal persuade the audience to admire her. The most successful responses gave balanced views of Lily starting with her admirable qualities: her confidence and fashion choices which are empowering for the girls and her communist views in trying to stand up for workers' rights. Features of these responses were perceptive comments questioning how genuine her communism was whilst admiring her for not letting Ernestine parrot her views, encouraging her to hold her own views and to get educated. There was understanding that there was little place for a powerful black woman either in her home community or in a white dominated USA.

Lily's dramatic entrance as she burst on the scene with, '*Who? Precious. If that ain't a question! It's me,*' was noted and it soon became clear that this vibrant and glamorous figure was homeless and hungry. She was seen as admirable for standing up for Ermina as a mother-figure, straightening the girl's hair '*just like mama used to*', someone to inspire them and for the fun she brought into their lives which contrasted sharply with Godfrey's ideas for their upbringing. Better responses moved on to explore her less admirable qualities: her alcoholism and drug-taking; untruthfulness and laziness; jealousy of Gerte and her behaviour over Ernestine's graduation dress. Godfrey's unhappiness at her presence as she mocks his new life and sobriety was also explored. Her sad demise was only mentioned in a few responses, testament for a few candidates, that overall, Nottage generated more sympathy than admiration for Lily.

Less successful responses focused on her admirable qualities in bringing laughter into the girls' lives with her drunken dancing, sexual banter and undermining of Godfrey's behaviour but without exploring both sides of the character and with little textual detail to support ideas. Some responses totally overlooked anything but the positive qualities and, if mentioned, were sympathetic of her weaknesses.

## R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 2

- (a) This was a very popular text and question with a wide range of excellent answers. The most successful responses read the question carefully and understood the focus was on how the characters were 'strikingly portrayed'.

Most candidates responded with sensitivity to Trotter and Osborne recognising the unease at the beginning of the passage and the need for coping mechanisms. They understood the context of the moment, the morning after Stanhope's heavy drinking session, referred to by Trotter in the

passage. There was critical understanding of the anxiety created by the silence, the knowledge of the 'Big attack' and the dramatic impact of their different responses to the silence and to Stanhope. Their caring natures and concern for Stanhope were explored. Better responses understood the nuances of Trotter's words, arguing that he was not simply condemning or gossiping about Stanhope, lowering his voice not to be heard, but was relating his concern. The best responses recognised the change of subject which led to a brief nostalgic escape from the war as the two men shared their memories of their gardens at home. Many candidates pointed out that this made them seem 'like normal human beings just like the audience', with a life beyond the war they hoped to return to.

Most candidates recognised the role played by Osborne who listened with interest, responded encouragingly and shared Trotter's memories, allowing Trotter to enjoy his moment. Trotter's lengthy sentences, humour and use of food as a coping mechanism, with his swift change of topic from the Boche to his jam were noted. This was contrasted to Osborne's brief comments to change from awkward topics; from preparations for the raid and Stanhope's drinking to the weather and gardening. The men's use of dashes and pauses were explored effectively with some sensitive detail to the way Osborne responds to Raleigh's 'lowered head' with his brief '*Did he?*' before moving on to talk of the sun. Osborne's care of his men and his plants and Trotter calling him 'Uncle' were all selected as indications of his caring nature.

There was some close detail to the language, stage directions and the symbolic use of light and the sun, patriotism in the colour of the flowers and the cycle of life with their hopes for the summer. More perceptive answers pointed out how weak the sun was and the pathos that they are not going to see the summer sun they long for.

Whilst there was awareness of the two men's different background and social class, less successful candidates were confused about Trotter's speech and argued he 'could not speak properly' as he was of a 'lower social class', rather than specifically the fact that he drops his 'aitches'. The weakest responses worked through the passage commenting on what was 'striking' about the war and dugout, rather than what the audience learns about the characters at this moment. There was confusion between the two men and their fear and anxiety were exaggerated. Some considered Trotter was a simple-minded man whose main role was to provide comic relief and could not understand why he should change from talking about the war to ask for the jam.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question but most candidates were able to engage with the relationship in detailed, personal responses. Most answers traced the friendship in a chronological manner, knew the text well and were able to identify key scenes where the relationship is clearly portrayed: Raleigh's arrival and initial conversation with Osborne; Stanhope's horror on seeing him; the censorship of the letter; the climatic scene after Osborne's death and the final scene following Raleigh's fatal injury and ultimate death. The most successful answers showed critical understanding and the dramatic impact as the hero-worshipping young boy, just out of school, arrives and is unaware of how the war has changed Stanhope. Better answers explored his enthusiastic comments about Stanhope and ironic recounting of Denis's anger at the boys' drinking at school. They explored Osborne's subtle attempts to forewarn Raleigh that Stanhope might have changed.

There was understanding of the compelling nature of the friendship and the deeper reasons for Stanhope's shock at having Raleigh join his company: his insecurity and shame at being 'found wanting'. Better answers explored the powerful moment when Osborne comforts and supports Stanhope after Raleigh's arrival, and by reading what Raleigh had written about him. His fear that Raleigh would have informed his sister, Stanhope's girlfriend, that he was an alcoholic and a monster, proved to be totally unfounded. The dramatic nature of Stanhope's language here as he demands the letter, '*Give me that letter,*' and the stage directions, '*shouting*' and '*trembling*' and at other times, were frequently highlighted.

Stanhope's powerfully dramatic reaction to Osborne's death and furious conflict with Raleigh were also effectively explored. The best answers understood Stanhope's underlying concerns for Raleigh in his attempt to prevent Raleigh going on the raid by offering to go himself, and particularly following Raleigh's fatal injury. There was some sensitive detail to their use of first names 'Jimmy' and 'Denis', in Raleigh's final moments as it re-established the intimacy of their pre-war relationship. This was contrasted with Stanhope's previous anger at the use of his first name as he now desperately tries to keep the dying Raleigh comfortable.

Less successful answers were unable to recall specific textual details to support points. This resulted in general comments on their friendship and much retelling of the scenes where Osborne puts Stanhope to bed or calms him down when he is angry over the prospect of Raleigh informing his sister of Stanhope's drinking problem.

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

#### Question 3

- (a) A relatively small number of candidates answered this question. Most candidates were able to engage with Elesin's arrogance, love of women, selfishness and the extent he would go to in order to satisfy his desires. They understood the importance of keeping Elesin happy and the context of being the King's Horseman. The most successful responses condemned his love of life and the irony in him believing he was a '*man of honour*' whilst taking advantage of his position to satisfy his lustful desires. They saw the warning signs that Elesin was not ready to make his journey through ritual suicide, and Iyaloja's understanding of this. Better answers focused on the ways Soyinka made this dramatic, exploring the hyperbole in describing the woman he desires, and the women being unable to understand his poetic use of language. His manipulation of Iyaloja and her reasons for not refusing his request for her son's betrothed were understood – the catastrophic impact on the future of Yoruba society if Elesin failed in his duty. For some candidates the treatment of the young woman was the most dramatic aspect of the passage as her consent was neither sought nor given.

Less successful responses worked through the passage explaining what was happening with little focus on the dramatic nature of the moment or understanding of the language.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question but all found Simon Pilkings to be arrogant in his total disregard for the Yoruba people and culture. Candidates engaged with the terms of the question and most conveyed their hatred for his sacrilegious actions in appropriating Yoruba Egungun costume for a 'fancy dress party' to impress the prince. This was contrasted to the Yoruba King's journey to the underworld, without his Horseman, whose ritual suicide was delayed due to his arrest by Pilkings. There was some comment on his prejudiced language and disdain for Yoruba and Muslim beliefs considering them '*nonsense*' and '*mumbo-jumbo*'. Both his offensive language to describe the people as '*sly, devious bastards*' and his arrogant attitude towards his wife were strongly criticised. Better answers offered a balanced approach, respecting him for doing his duty as the British Colonial District Officer, noting his assistance to Olunde and acknowledging his misguided attempt to save a man from performing what he considered a barbaric act of suicide rather than a ceremonial death ritual.

Weaker responses gave a character study and were unaware of his job, with some thinking he was a police officer. They portrayed him as a stereotypical white racist without any personal engagement or comment on how this made them feel about him.

### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

#### Question 4

- (a) This was a popular text and question and there was a wide range of work seen. Many candidates responded to this question by providing a description of Viola in the passage, rather than focusing on how her introduction is striking. Most understood that after the shipwreck, finding herself in a strange land, she has to use her wits to find employment and provide a safe future for herself.

The most successful answers considered her independent spirit, courage and confidence, as seen in her swift change of mood from being mournful over the loss of Sebastian to one of optimism for the future. Her distress was noted and stronger responses linked this more explicitly to the ideas of female assertion and Elizabethan views of women. They were able to compare Viola's and Olivia's responses to the loss of a brother and commended Viola for her down to earth and unconventional approach within Elizabethan society. Better answers understood Shakespeare's methods in setting up later events with the introduction of both Olivia and Orsino, and the idea of unrequited love. They understood her dramatic function as she establishes the central themes of appearance versus reality and mistaken identity. Most candidates quoted Viola's words, '*Conceal me what I am*' and explored her decision to disguise herself as Cesario, commenting on the staging and the foreshadowing of later events, but without losing focus on the passage.

There was some close reference to the language and dramatic impact of the passage. The initial shipwreck provided drama with the possibility that Sebastian might be alive leading the audience to imagine the confusion should he reappear later in the play. There was close attention to Viola's inquisitive nature, her rapid questioning of the captain, and her ability to change plans quickly from initially wanting to work for Olivia to a decisive, *'I'll serve this duke'*. However, there was much confusion over her language. She was cited as speaking prose/blank verse/iambic pentameter but without any textual reference, or understanding, of the effects of the different speech patterns.

Less successful answers demonstrated some understanding of Viola's resourcefulness and optimistic character but there was a tendency to lose focus on her *'introduction'* after commenting on her plan to disguise herself, and to discuss mistaken identity in the rest of the play. There was much confusion over Sebastian's attempt to save himself by binding himself to the mast. Some thought it was Sebastian who had been seen riding away on the dolphin, and not the mythological character Arion, and that the captain had made it up to keep Viola calm.

The weakest answers wrote a character analysis starting from this point but lapsing into a simple retelling of the passage and later events. Some thought Viola was being blackmailed by the captain and paid him for his silence about her disguise. There was misunderstanding of Elysium with some thinking Sebastian had landed in another country.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question. All candidates were able to identify the importance of mistaken identity in the play, focusing on how Olivia falls in love with Cesario/Viola and Cesario/Viola falls in love with Orsino. The most successful answers discussed the intricacies of the plot and how mistaken identity played a key role in developing and resolving it. The best answers explored the deeper implications of love as a form of madness and cited a number of cases of mistaken identity including: Feste's disguise as Sir Topaz and his disguise of his intelligence; the deception of Malvolio and the dramatic irony in the fact that the audience knows that Cesario is a woman. There was some understanding of comedy as tragedy averted, with the dangers of disguise, madness and cruelty (Malvolio's treatment) just about remedied by the final marriages. There was awareness of the audience's involvement, and enjoyment of the play, through Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony.

Less successful answers struggled to focus and covered a broad range of examples of mistaken identity without consideration of the dramatic impact created. There was little textual detail to support ideas leading to some very narrative responses. The weakest answers wrote generally about *Twelfth Night* in the Christmas period and the concept of the Lord of Misrule then simply narrated what happened in some incidents of mistaken identity. Some focused solely on the gulling of Malvolio and tended to retell the events without linking it to the terms of the question.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

### **Question 5**

- (a) This was also a very popular text and there were many insightful and thorough responses. The question required candidates to comment on the power of the scene as a dramatic opening to Act 2, so reference to later events was within the terms of the question. The dramatic presentation of the storm and its intensity was well understood, as was its symbolic echo of the emotional tempest to come. However, some candidates, in focussing on this foreshadowing aspect of the storm, provided too much detail on later events, losing focus on the passage.

The most successful answers identified the context, explored the passage in detail, and were able to relate textual details of the extract to broader themes of the play. They noted how the portrayal of Othello's courage and bravery lent greater impact to his downfall, with the violence of the storm foreshadowing the violence of Othello's temper and fury later in the play. Stronger answers contrasted Iago and Brabantio's descriptions of Othello earlier in the play with his depiction here as *'warlike', 'brave' and 'worthy'*. They understood the dramatic impact on the men, and of the audience, awaiting Othello's arrival and fearing for his safety during the storm. Better answers explored the irony surrounding Cassio's regard for Othello in light of future events and the knowledge that Iago intends to use him to bring down Othello. They commented on structural aspects, for example the contrast between Venice and Cyprus, the implications of the change of setting, and also in how the destruction of the Turkish fleet gives space for another kind of war to emerge. *'Well-selected textual reference'* and *'close analysis of the language'* were features of

these answers and there were perceptive comments on the descriptive imagery of the storm and the animalistic imagery of the '*monstrous mane*'.

Less successful answers were narrative in approach, working through the events and exchanges rather than exploring the tension on stage. They struggled with the context, who these characters were and who was safe or lost at sea. Whilst they understood the raging storm and destruction of the Turkish fleet, there was some misunderstanding of the language where candidates attempted to analyse individual words, rather than in the context of the passage. Weaker answers found the language difficult and worked through the text explaining words literally, for example the '*ribs of oak*' were human ribs, likely to be destroyed in the storm, and '*His bark*' referred to Othello 'as a dog'. Consequently, there was often little to reward in these responses.

- (b) This was a popular question and candidates responded enthusiastically to Iago making clear they found him a fascinating character. Many candidates argued that he, and not Othello, was the main protagonist as he drives the plot and controls character behaviour throughout. There was audience engagement and some candidates conveyed respect for his intelligence and disdain for his victims. The most successful answers explored how he uses the insecurities of his victims and how he manages to destroy Othello's whole personality through his mastery of language, and psychological manipulation. They were able to write sensitively about his pathological jealousy and the way in which his soliloquies, asides and the dramatic irony, draw the audience into an unwanted sense of knowledge and complicity.

Many wrote about his carefully prepared plans: managing Cassio's downfall; his manipulation of Roderigo and Brabantio and his manipulation of Othello through his language and use of the handkerchief. There was insight into Iago's language and the metaphor of the spider's web and pestilence poured into Othello's ear. The most successful answers explored how the style of Othello's language seemed to echo Iago's as the play progresses reducing him to brutish and monosyllabic: '*O, blood, blood, blood!*'. Iago's motives were discussed but better answers argued that these were unbelievable as motivation for Iago's campaign to destroy Othello. The strongest candidates concluded his lack of clear motivation remains a mystery and adds to Iago's fascination. They cited his refusal to speak at the end as evidence that Iago himself had no justification for his campaign to destroy Othello.

A few less successful answers used prepared character studies of Iago which would have benefitted from closer links to the question and the ways in which Shakespeare makes him such a fascinating character. Nevertheless, they were able to describe some of the incidents orchestrated by Iago, as well as possible reasons for his behaviour. Some used just two quotations, '*Honest Iago*' and '*I am not what I am*' and referenced Coleridge's 'motiveless malignity' but without exploring them further. Candidates who lost focus on Iago and wrote about Machiavellian schemes were often self-penalising. In the weakest answers, Iago was simply a baddie, evil to the core and the devil himself, though they were unable to support this with close reference to the text.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

**Paper 0992/42**  
**Unseen**

## **Key messages**

- Most candidates read the text carefully, make good use of the bullet points and provide supporting evidence and technical analysis to support their interpretations.
- Focused comment on the effects of language is more important than simply identifying literary techniques.
- Individual words and images received focused attention but need to be analysed in the context of the whole text.
- The strongest responses consider alternative interpretations and evaluate on the basis of evidence instead of making assumptions.

## **General comments**

Examiners reported very positively on the strengths of candidates' answers to the Unseen texts in this session. Candidates clearly appreciated the choice offered to them, and there were many responses to the Prose passage even if the Poetry question remains more popular. Candidates enjoyed engaging with issues as well as language, and most responses showed understanding well beyond the literal meaning and some effective analysis of the writer's methods and consideration of the text's impact on the reader. Assessors feel the quality continues to improve, and that must in part be a result of the attention paid to these reports, and to effective teaching and preparation.

Misunderstandings can usually be avoided by careful reading of the text. The stem question and the supporting bullet points are intended to help shape candidates' responses and guide them towards valid interpretations. It is also important that candidates pay attention to the rubric which precedes the question as this clarifies any uncertainty about the nature of the situation, the characters involved and the genre of the text. Some candidates nevertheless persist, like Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, in insisting that the poem means whatever they want it to mean, pursuing symbolic readings which go against the grain of the introductory material, and the grammar of the poem's own syntax. This is where context is important in an unseen text, and in the relationship of a word or image to its place in a sentence. While candidates can construct personal readings of their own around the language of the poem, these interpretations are unlikely to show the clarity of understanding, convincing and coherent argument and sensitivity to details of language and context which will be evident in the strongest scripts.

The bullet points are a helpful guide for many candidates in structuring their responses, timing their answers and paragraphing effectively. However, it is not necessary to keep repeating the words of the bullet points: they should be a starting point, but a strong script will have its own argument and points to make.

Candidates are always keen to demonstrate their knowledge of literary terms. Terms such as hyperbole, enjambment, anaphora, caesura, metaphor and polysyndeton were used frequently, but not always with understanding or followed by a clear explanation of their effects. Nor was it always understood that prose narrative has its own technical terminology which is different from that of poetry. Some candidates focused so much on finding features, that they lost sight of the text as a whole. The single-minded focus on language features often led to a lack of attention to the question and little evidence of understanding the impact of the text as a whole. Especially for weaker candidates, literary terms are sometimes a hurdle as they focus too much on the technicality and too little on the impact. Precise naming of terms is not necessary for a higher-level mark, and candidates who identify literary techniques correctly may not actually show understanding of the text.

Long quotations are generally unnecessary. Candidates should be encouraged to quote only the parts of the text that they need as evidence. However, particularly in poetry, candidates should read the entire line that

they are quoting to ensure that the lines they quote are interpreted correctly in the context of the line, phrase and sentence in which they occur, or misinterpretations are likely. Comment on effects needs to be clearly linked to the words quoted and their place in the text: generalised comments like ‘it adds emphasis/makes the reader read on/makes it dramatically effective/makes you feel you are there’ are unlikely to be rewarded highly. While good word-level analysis helps candidates in the middle range of ability, the higher levels ask for a clarity of understanding which is demonstrated through a consistent interpretation and an overview of the text as a whole, which is probably obvious from the first paragraph of the answer. It is always pleasing to see structural analysis of sound, rhythm and form in responses to poetry, and an appreciation of narrative viewpoint, development and changes in focus in responses to prose.

Quality of written communication is not assessed in this paper, but strong scripts nevertheless tend to be well-written, often impressively so, and to advance a consistent interpretation and argument. They are also likely to demonstrate a degree of Keatsian negative capability, not jumping to conclusions but working out their ideas after weighing up alternative readings. Instead of imposing an interpretation, these candidates will evaluate the evidence. They will also avoid repetition and will consider the implications of their reading of the text in order to reach interesting conclusions that do not simply repeat points made in their introductions and in the body of their answers.

It is therefore clear that a good response will be a well-planned one, not necessarily a long one. The candidate will have given due time to reading both texts before making up their mind which one to write about and re-reading the text they have chosen in order to underline key words and phrases for analysis before planning their answers, keeping the bullet points and their response to them clearly in view. They will therefore have made good use of the recommended reading and planning time available. When writing, they will have developed points from their observations about language, structure and form in order to reach conclusions about the writer’s purpose as well as their methods. Their argument will be clear, and they will take care to ensure that their own expression, choice of vocabulary and even their handwriting try to match the clarity of that interpretation in order to communicate their personal and critical response effectively. Although this syllabus values personal response, at a higher level that response should also be critical, with a clear understanding of what the writer wanted to achieve and why, looking at language in terms of its emotive effect on the reader.

Teachers can usefully prepare candidates by breaking down the task into strong introductory comments, focused comment on language and interesting and evaluative conclusions.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

The poem ‘Urban’ by Nissim Ezekial, a poet who lived in Mumbai, proved popular and accessible to most candidates who chose this question. Most were able to identify the themes of isolation and loneliness, fragmentation, alienation, loss of identity and modernity. By paying attention to these themes and motifs, even less strong scripts were still able to demonstrate some deeper understanding of the poem and its commentary on urban life. All candidates were therefore able to articulate what the poem is about, who is speaking, and what emotions or ideas are being conveyed. Many made reference to the connotations of the title linking this to the past and present lives of the man presented. Only stronger scripts, however, took time to identify the structure and form of the poem and meaningfully analyse its language, paying attention to specific words and phrases. The best answers were able to step back from line by line/stanza by stanza analysis and focus on how the ideas develop in the poem, cross-referencing the layers of meaning and possible interpretations.

The majority of candidates took a chronological approach to analysis and also followed the bullet points. The opening sentence and the specific reference ‘far away’ enabled candidates to comment on the fact that his past life was physically and metaphorically in the distance. Many made points about the tone of the poem often identifying it as ‘melancholy’. ‘Dreams’ of a past life in the countryside where the poetic voice was more ‘spiritually and mentally fulfilled’ were frequently juxtaposed with the man’s current ‘monotonous’ life in the city. There were several different interpretations of ‘broken roads’ and the ‘circles’ tracked in his head, and these could be read as both literal – the conditions in the countryside (possibly as a reason for migration) and metaphorical in that he has ‘broken’ from the past. Many saw him as trapped in ‘circles’, which, for some, were circles of hell ‘tracked within his head’ in a recurring nightmare. Some applied these terms to the city rather than the country, but these ignored the grammar of the next sentence: because these are the images of his dreams ‘before he wakes’, these are clearly images from the man’s past and ones he does not consciously control. Most candidates interpreted this stanza as having a negative tone – picking up on the

desolate language linked to broken/dry/dead etc. One response was that the dry river ‘suggests disastrous, almost apocalyptic consequences of a completely barren wasteland.’ The word ‘claims’ was often a discerning factor in identifying deeper understanding: when candidates explored why he would ‘claim’ to love it, this sometimes led to consideration of the writer’s choice of third person narrative and distance from the man’s emotions. The writer may be suggesting those emotions were ambiguous or that the man did not really understand them himself. Some candidates wanted to see this as an indication that the poem was a metaphor for a love affair: however, the introductory rubric makes it clear that this is about migration, whether willing or forced, and the title confirms that the countryside is seen from an urban perspective. As one candidate put it: ‘the division between the dreamscape and physical plane is heavily blurred.’

The second stanza led to some very effective comments about the man’s disconnection from his past close relationship with nature. Many wanted to find the ‘pathetic fallacy here’ and linked the negation of the natural world with his own negative feelings. The personification of skies born again at dawn is juxtaposed with dramatisation of the soothing touch of ‘the shadows of the night’; strong candidates were sensitive to the sensuous nature of this description. Although some saw the image of the shadows of the night as sinister, others saw it as ‘a motherly gesture of tenderness, like a mother gently closing a child’s eyes’ and talked of ‘the sweet embrace of darkness in the night.’ However, in his urban context the man negates all these, and strong scripts pointed out the words that do this: ‘never’, ‘nor’, ‘neither’, ‘no’ and binary oppositions of day/night, sun/rain and depth/height to show that this negation is all embracing. Some saw him as rejecting the seductions of nature. The day dawns ‘silently’ without a chorus of birdsong. Many believed that skyscrapers blotted out the man’s view of the rising sun; similarly, some referenced urban pollution or the impact of artificial light which meant it was never truly dark; some thought this was a metaphor for his own depression and unwillingness to welcome a new day or find rest at night. Only a few linked this to the disturbing images of his dreams in the first stanza. Many candidates did find it easy to note and analyse the developing contrast between city and country and link this to the idea of disconnection. Further development of this point considered his present life as unnatural. The negations ‘neither sun nor rain’ and ‘no depth or height’ seen as symbolic of an artificial urban life with no natural variations in the weather/landscape, showing what the man’s life now lacked. A restricted view in more than one sense.

The third stanza developed the theme of the man’s waking hours, and the contrast between country and city, but also dream and reality. Many candidates commented on ‘like a passion burns’ as they identified it as a simile. Middle level candidates in particular, tended to see this image as negative. They interpreted passion as dangerous and burning as representing destruction; he is literally burning in the city but longing to return to the countryside. However, higher-level candidates were able to consider the ambiguity of this image and its possible interpretations. Such responses tended to explore the implications of ‘passion’ as a strong emotion that cannot be entirely controlled; there is something about the city that pulls/draws him into it and makes him want to be there, despite its destructive cost. Those who linked ‘passion’ to desire could more easily see why it would burn.

The man’s past life was linked to a more solitary existence, as he dreams of being ‘alone’ instead of surrounded by the cacophony of the city and its ‘traffic’; the verb ‘floating’ and its link to ‘dreaming’ emphasise that his past life is in his dreams, but the pull of the city is his reality now. Some candidates connected the ‘away’ of the opening line to the ‘Away’ of the penultimate line as the man now seems to be making a conscious, if reluctant, choice to turn to the city and that he has resolved to be away from the natural world he ‘claims’ he loves. This interpretation is consolidated by the final reference to ‘kindred clamour close at hand’ emphasizing the present familiar reality for the man as opposed to the broken/dead world of the countryside which is now ‘far away’. The strongest readings explored the cacophonous alliteration of ‘kindred clamour’ and consonance in ‘traffic turns’, and the hard reality of what is close contrasted with the polysyndetic list of the natural landscape of his dreams. There was impressive commentary on the triplet ‘beach and tree and stone’, natural features diminishing in size, and ultimately lifeless. Some analysed the finality of the last line, with its suggestion that he was reconciled to his fate. While some candidates could not understand why he might live in the city if he did not want to, others could see that the poet might be dramatising the need to accept change in adult life, or the realities of forced migration. Some linked the imagery of dried and dying nature in the first stanza to contemporary concerns about climate change and the impact of urbanisation, which was a valid personal response, while more critical responses picked up the music of the verse and were able to see that the city has its music too.

Most candidates responded to the question by expressing pity for the man and concern about his mental state, feeling he could only articulate ‘a dull ennui’. Others saw him as a representative figure showing how urbanisation has distanced us from nature. One said the title suggests “the poet is ‘othering’ this new environment”. Another observed that ‘the poet is using the city as a metaphysical conceit.’ Impressive responses usually explored the structure and form of the poem, as well as its language and images: for example, the use of the present tense throughout reflected that ‘this is happening now and will continue

indefinitely’ or enjambment shows that ‘the idea refuses to be obstructed by obstacles such as punctuation.’ Most who commented on the rhyme scheme thought it reflected the rigidity of life in the city. Impressively, some looked in detail at the half-rhymes, or the interruption of enjambment by caesural pauses, as indications of the mismatch between reality and desires. It was very pleasing for Examiners to read such close engagement with the verse. One final exemplar will show this: ‘The last three lines of the poem show an intermingling of the urban reality and the man’s natural past further accentuating the influence and intrusiveness of the city. The enjambment of the fourth and fifth lines of the last stanza shows the blur of memories and realities. The fact that it is placed in the last stanza shows that this is the final consequence of ‘Urban,’ colonising the man’s pure and precious past.’

## Question 2

In contrast, the prose extract from *The North Water* by Ian McGuire did not prompt such diversity of opinion and candidates tended to choose the same phrases for comment. The main difference between responses was that while some used the text as part of a narrative commentary and saw it as the reporting of a story about real people, others, prompted by a question which explicitly referenced ‘the writing’, critically addressed the writer’s choices and the effects of the language used. Most saw the narration as third person omniscient, but a few found places where the reader was invited to see things as Sumner saw them, for example ‘Where is Cavendish?’ The narrative viewpoint is really close third person, tracking Sumner’s thought process in the moment they come to him, as indicated by the choice of present tense. Some candidates appreciated the immediacy of this and its contribution to the drama, understanding that Sumner’s perspective is necessarily limited. The suspicion was (rightly) raised that Cavendish might have deliberately left him to drown. The final sentence caused most disagreement. Some were convinced that Sumner died and used the reference to the sky as symbolic of heaven. Although the note defined ‘harrowed’ as streaked, one saw it as having the double meaning in the sense of it being a harrowing experience. Some thought that the ending was deliberately ambiguous, making the reader want to know what happened. There was general sympathy for Sumner’s heroic struggle, his ‘dance with death’ as one candidate put it, and appreciation for the writer’s skill in making the situation dramatic. However, candidates might have borne in mind that writers rarely kill their narrative focal points and principal characters early in their novels.

Many candidates wrote with understanding of deeper meaning, using well-selected references and clearly addressing the methods used by the author. Most candidates wrote about the dramatic decision at the gap between the floes when ‘Sumner stops a moment.’ These candidates often referenced Sumner’s ‘experience’ as luring the reader into a false sense of security and belief that the jump would be easy for him. However, they also noted how language is used to create a ‘sense of foreboding at the risk of the jump.’ The ominous tone is heightened at the beginning by the mention of Sumner’s ‘bad leg.’ There was recognition that the writer might have deliberately presented the jump as not too challenging, at least to Sumner: it is a ‘short leap’ and ‘he has learned from experience’ so he knows what he is doing; thus his over-confidence becomes ironic when he slips sideways. Some commented on slippery and sinister alliteration as beginning to indicate that circumstances, and perhaps nature itself, are against him. Referencing narrative structure, lots of candidates noted how the pace slowed to reflect Sumner’s thoughts about the jump and his hesitation, followed by a spattering of commas to ramp up the pace as Sumner jumped and failed, contributing to the build-up of tension and drama. There were detailed observations about the weather, a number mentioning the ‘claustrophobic’ effect when ‘snow fills the air’. Candidates conscious of the ‘dramatic’ identified hubris followed by nemesis, with the personified snow which ‘fills the air all around’ and ‘whips against his face’ as Sumner’s antagonist in this tragedy. One candidate suggested that ‘the pathetic fallacy here suggests that this is nature’s way of physically restraining Sumner, acting as a warning.’ Stronger candidates also focused on the language used to describe the setting, unpacking the description of ‘black and icy waters’ foreshadowing Sumner’s demise. The simile ‘clown-like’ and adjective ‘ludicrous’ led to some perceptive comments from higher-level candidates especially about the lack of control and confidence exhibited by Sumner, his own sense of irony and the writer’s almost Shakespearean intrusion of an incongruous comic note into the tragedy.

Candidates identified the ‘multiple attempts’ made by Sumner to survive the catastrophe of the clown-like fall and noted the ‘resolute mindset of Sumner’ might be the writer’s way to cultivate more drama from the scene. Strong candidates identified a ‘violent’ semantic field of thrashing, straining, and flinging to help portray the ‘fierce struggle’ that Sumner was engaged in. Description of his struggles to save himself from the waters focused on the sensory deprivation of ‘submerged and sightless’, the desperate brutality of ‘thrashes’, ‘flings’, ‘grabs’ and ‘heave’, the unusual noun in ‘drench of coldness’, the active participles ‘gasping’ and personified blood ‘roaring’ in his ears. Some linked this to ‘ferocious’ to suggest it was as if Sumner was fighting a wild animal. Less successful responses leaned too heavily upon their understanding of the situation to explain how tension was created, rather than considering the methods used by the writer. The third bullet point was very helpful for candidates in forcing a response focused upon methods, and this

was where otherwise middling work became stronger, with discussion of pathetic fallacy and the violent personification of the snow. Many noticed personification of the ice creaking and yawning ‘as it shifts’, some detecting nature’s indifference to his fate, and others suggesting a dormant force had been awakened and was out for revenge. As one of them put it: the ice was a ‘great monster out to kill’, adding that ‘yawned suggests it has been summoned from a great sleep and it beginning to awaken’. Stronger candidates noticed the animalistic imagery associated with nature and giving power to the surrounding environment, in contrast to Sumner’s lack of power in his current predicament. One candidate linked Sumner’s position to the fact that he has been hunting and is pulling animal skins – this was effective use of the introductory information as the candidate gave a personal response/interpretation suggesting that this was nature’s revenge for the hunting of wild animals.

The main supporting evidence used from the third paragraph was the reference to Cavendish leading to speculation about whether Sumner has been abandoned by Cavendish. Many noticed shorter sentences and saw these as indication of increasingly breathless desperation on Sumner’s part. Descriptive details had less attention: more might have been made of sensory images in the narrative and structural patterns.

Candidates write a lot about rhythm and about sensuous and structural devices in poetry and could be encouraged to do so when tackling prose extracts. The short sentence ‘he was alone’ dramatises the extent of Sumner’s own recognition of his abandonment and isolation. It contrasts with the lengthy sentences which present his repeated attempts to ‘gain purchase’ on the ice, and on his situation. Entirely on his own now, he is confronting forces much bigger than he is, with only ‘his own power’ to rely on, and not any form of external aid. The best responses made much of the idea that nature is his real enemy here: the seawater has agency as it ‘fills his mouth’, the gravitational tug of ‘his sodden clothes’ drags him down, and the ice threatens to crush as well as drown him. For some, it was nature, as well as the writer, that is taunting Sumner with the delayed narrative of disaster.

Candidates were alert to the structural device of rule of three: in this instance, it is not ‘third time lucky’ as each attempt to raise himself is more aggressive and suspenseful, teasing the reader with false hope before a further downward plunge in the falling action of the narrative. Sumner’s belief, in the final paragraph, that the ‘balance is shifting’ was seen by one candidate, developing the idea of an ongoing fight, to show an ‘inequality of power’; another felt that ‘Sumner’s belief that he is altering that harmonious balance is perhaps punished by nature.’ Many wrote effectively about the cumulative effect of physical detail to convey the intensity of this moment, and how a small amount of critical time is dragged out almost endlessly, before Sumner inevitably succumbs to a stronger force. His ‘ungodly effort’ is in vain as the personified floe seems to deliberately make another ‘sideways’ move; he ‘slips’ again and as he ‘slams’ down hard appears to have been finally knocked down by his opponent, the ice, in the third round of an uneven fight. Stronger candidates were able to comment on the methods used to present the physical hostility of the environment, creating a dramatic scenario for Sumner’s attempt to fight and conquer it. One candidate suggested the ‘sharp angle of the ice’ represented the hostile, dangerous threat of the landscape. The final line of the ‘white and harrowed sky’ contrasted with the ‘dark water’ allowed candidates to consider symbolism of light versus dark, with Sumner’s ‘slump’ into darkness an ending without hope. Some felt a glimpse of heaven had been granted to him, only for him to surrender to the darkness. The most perceptive responses looked for, and engaged with, patterns and contrasts of tone and language across the piece as a whole. These candidates were able to evaluate where and how tension increased, and to discuss the ambiguity of the ending.

Weaker candidates on the prose retold an abridged and partial version of the story, only quoting and commenting in their response to the last bullet point on the hostility of the landscape. Stronger candidates integrated commentary on the extreme environment of the Arctic, and its resistance to human attempts to master it, throughout their answers. Many rushed to judgment about Sumner and thought that he was panicking or over-reacting, when in fact he remains composed and rational throughout, despite the desperate actions of his body. Owing to poor timing, too few dealt with the final paragraph in depth. Although many assumed Sumner had drowned, some saw ‘and away’ as open-ended. Some top-level responses were astounding in their analysis of sentence length and structure, sound and imagery and some even detected foreshadowing religious imagery, not least in ‘harrowed’ and ‘ungodly’. Some pointed out that the ‘creak and yawn’ of the ice was Gothic in sound and imagery – perhaps ‘the gates of hell opening’ – and noted that Sumner’s ‘harrumphing’, like ‘clown-like and ludicrous’ could show Sumner’s mind amused by the undignified behaviour of his body. One candidate wrote: “‘He must pull himself up by his own power’ indicates the lifting of something heavy and on an implicit level this might not only be Sumner himself but the great weight of his failure and the weakness of his leg”. Another argued that “the juxtaposition between ‘thrashes’ and ‘yawn’ thus creates the idea that the ice is indifferent to his suffering which presents it as cruel”. It is this kind of impressively sophisticated analysis of the writer’s methods which leads to confident evaluation of narrative purpose and effects on the reader.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

**Paper 0992/05**  
**Coursework**

In successful responses, candidates:

- Show a sustained engagement with the detail of texts studied.
- Focus clearly on the task.
- Integrate relevant, concise references to support their ideas.
- Analyse in detail and sensitively the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- have only a basic understanding of the surface meaning of texts
- write at excessive length, labouring and repeating points, and losing focus on the task
- make general assertions
- list techniques without close analysis
- offer pre-learned ‘themes’ rather than personal responses to the task.

## **General comments**

There was much evidence of coursework of a high standard this session, where candidates showed a personal and evaluative engagement with texts. The strongest assignments showed that candidates had taken the opportunities offered by coursework: a close study of their texts, with evidence of research, and careful presentation of the final drafts of their assignments.

There were some instances of syllabus infringements, for example, where candidates entered assignments dealing with only one short story or with a single discrete extract from a prose or drama text. The syllabus requires that assignments refer to the whole text and, in the case of poems and short stories, at least two poems or short stories.

The most successful assignments sustained a clear focus on a carefully worded task designed to enable candidates to meet the descriptors of the highest levels. Such tasks direct candidates to address AO3 by exploring ways in which writers achieve their effects. Tasks which do not do this can have the effect of constraining candidates’ performance. Questions on whether Mrs Danvers loved Rebecca and who the real gentleman is in *Great Expectations* make fascinating topics for classroom debate but encourage candidates to see characters as real-life people rather than fictional constructs. Tasks on characters must be set which explicitly direct candidates to explore ways in which writers *portray* characters. Examples of suitable coursework tasks can be found in the 0475/0992 Coursework Training Handbook.

Some responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text, sometimes at exhaustive length, but lacked a clear focus on the task. As has been observed before, this is an unproductive approach common in many poetry assignments where candidates work through the poem offering a line-by-line commentary, without a close focus on the actual task. Centres should remind their candidates that an advantage of the Coursework component is that it encourages skills of editing and re-drafting. Candidates should be taught the skill of selecting material carefully in a way that directly addresses the task; every sentence should contribute to the unfolding argument. This will help candidates in their preparation for the set texts exam papers.

As in previous sessions, the most convincing and persuasive essays sustained a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects (AO3), relating their points to the task. By contrast, less successful assignments often commented discretely on connotations of specific words without relating them to their use in the text. This may be a consequence of candidates following an overly rigid and potentially constraining framework (such as PEE, PEEL or PETAL).

Several centres submitted empathic responses, with most providing the necessary information: the name of the character and the precise moment in the text that the interior monologue takes place. The most successful responses captured a convincingly authentic voice for the chosen character and moment. Less successful responses often showed an understanding of the character and moment but needed to capture a more clearly recognisable voice.

### Guidance for teachers

This guidance, which has appeared in previous reports, is still relevant for future coursework submissions.

Guidance on task-setting can be found in the Coursework Handbook, which stresses the importance of **(a)** wording tasks that direct candidates explicitly to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects and **(b)** avoiding command words which are insufficient such as 'Describe' and 'Explain'. Teachers within a centre should together discuss the appropriateness of proposed tasks before they are given to candidates. This enables any problems with the tasks to be resolved before it is too late.

There follows a reminder of what constitutes good practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

- Start each assignment with the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment should be clearly stated. This is important since it allows the Moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has addressed the task.
- Use focused ticking in the body of the text to indicate valid and thoughtful points, together with concise marginal and summative comments which relate to the wording of the levels descriptors. Do not simply write the supposed AOs in the margin; this is of very little benefit to any subsequent reader, as it does not reveal the *extent* to which a particular assessment objective has been addressed. Instead, more specific reference should be made to the relevant levels descriptors.
- Provide a brief explanation on the assignment or cover sheet in cases where marks are changed during internal moderation. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it enables a centre to justify its award of marks to all subsequent readers.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided:

- Excessive ticking (e.g. of every paragraph or every line).
- Hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality.
- Labelling by assessment objective.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently. The cover sheet (or individual record card) should be secured by treasury tag or staple which allows easy access to candidate work. Plastic folders are an unwelcome distraction. In well-administered centres care had been taken to:

- include all candidates on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form
- transcribe totals accurately across the various documents.

All centres are advised to include a clerical checking stage in their moderation procedures before submitting their paperwork to Cambridge. This check should be carried out by a different person from the one who completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms and Mark Sheets originally.