

# Principal examiner reports for teachers

Principal examiner reports for teachers summarise what candidates did well and what candidates needed to improve for this examination series only.

This report is to be used in conjunction with the question paper and mark scheme.

For guidance on teaching and learning we provide resources for many of our syllabuses.

| Resource                                                                                                                                                                   | Where to find it                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grade descriptions – Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification. | <a href="#">School support hub</a><br>Select: Subject > Resource finder > Syllabus and specimen materials |
| Schemes of work – Schemes of work are designed to support you in your teaching and lesson planning.                                                                        | <a href="#">School support hub</a><br>Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning           |
| Lesson planning – Guidance on how to plan a lesson.                                                                                                                        | <a href="#">Lesson planning</a>                                                                           |
| Resource plus – There may be additional resources such as teaching packs containing lesson plans, resources and worksheets and videos for aspects of your syllabus.        | <a href="#">School support hub</a><br>Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning           |
| Teaching tools                                                                                                                                                             | <a href="#">Teaching Tools</a>                                                                            |
| Exemplar candidate responses                                                                                                                                               | <a href="#">School support hub</a><br>Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning           |
| Learner guide – A guide for students to help them understand what the course involves.                                                                                     | <a href="#">School support hub</a><br>Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning           |
| Community forums – Do you have a question or something to share? Our online forums are great way to keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community.  | <a href="#">Community forum on the school support hub</a>                                                 |
| Access to scripts for this series.                                                                                                                                         | <a href="#">Access to scripts service</a>                                                                 |
| Results analysis is available for some syllabuses.                                                                                                                         | <a href="#">Results analysis</a>                                                                          |
| Test maker is available for some subjects.                                                                                                                                 | <a href="#">Test maker</a>                                                                                |

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# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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|------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Paper 8695/11</b><br/><b>Writing</b></p> |
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## Key messages

### **What candidates did well**

- Candidates managed their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper.
- Candidates read instructions in the questions and followed them carefully, to ensure that they wrote relevant content in the correct form.
- Candidates understood the importance of focusing on key words in the question.
- Candidates knew the conventions of different genres such as articles, speeches and reviews.
- Candidates were aware of the need for clear paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech.
- Candidates planned their ideas and organised extended responses logically.
- Candidates checked their responses and edited them for clarity, accuracy and completeness.
- Candidates showed an overall secure grasp of technical accuracy, particularly in spelling, punctuation and tense use.

### **What candidates needed to improve**

- Some candidates needed to provide more accuracy in sentence construction, spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Some candidates needed to plan more carefully to maintain focus on the task and address the intended audience and purpose.
- Some candidates were less adept at matching their register to the task.
- Some candidates restated ideas rather than developing them. This was particularly evident in the article, review and debate tasks.
- Some candidates needed to strengthen consistency in tone, tense and register to enhance clarity and form across tasks.
- Some candidates needed to write more legibly and clearly to ensure communication was not impeded.
- Some candidates needed to proofread carefully, particularly for accurate sentence demarcation and for tense confusion/inconsistency. Such oversights impeded, sometimes seriously, the overall sense of fluency and cohesion.
- Some candidates needed to strengthen their language analysis by focusing on the effects of specific words rather than merely naming devices.
- Some candidates needed to be able to be consistent in their use of tenses, some switching from past to present (or vice versa) in the same paragraph and even, sometimes, in the same sentence.
- Some candidates needed to be more assured in the conventions of punctuating dialogue.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

##### **(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Candidates wrote clearly, with accuracy and control of grammar and structure.
- Candidates used a range of vocabulary and sentence types including some complex lexis and structures.
- Candidates used appropriate genre features such as headline, sub-headings and publisher.

- Candidates produced effective titles such as: 'Every Step You Take', 'Holiday Travelling', and 'At Your Own Pace', demonstrating awareness of article conventions.
- Candidates established engaging openings by directly addressing the reader or posing reflective questions. Openings such as 'Have you ever thought ...', 'I recently heard about a family ...' and 'Recently I've been hearing about these fantastic vacations ...' immediately positioned the article as a personal recommendation.
- Candidates explored a range of benefits, including factors such as mental and physical health, appreciation of nature, time with family, cost savings and the reduced impact on the environment.
- Candidates successfully incorporated an imaginary family's experience as their starting point, including interviews with different family members.
- Candidates adopted an engaging article style, sustaining an enthusiastic tone while promoting the benefits of slow travel through deliberately selected language and a clear awareness of audience and purpose, for example: 'In a world of fast paced, frenetic sensationalism, travel has been overtaken by short thrills and fleeting encounters.'
- Candidates displayed good scientific knowledge and lexis, with additional awareness of well-being and mindfulness advice, for example, references to 'cortisol' and 'anxiety'.
- Candidates incorporated clear endings, with the most common ending being a call to action: 'Want more? Travel Slow. Away you go!'
- Candidates used coherent paragraphing, effective topic sentences and a consistent register.
- Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the required format, showing awareness of audience and tone.
- Candidates consistently used a range of language to create a compelling voice, which gave their responses a personal and engaging tone.

#### **Limited responses**

- Some candidates needed to focus more on basic grammar and punctuation, including sentence demarcation.
- Some candidates needed to develop their responses fully, as paragraphs were extremely short.
- Some candidates' responses focused heavily on one benefit, for example, the environment or exercise, as opposed to a variety of benefits.
- Some candidates listed points without developing content or detail.
- Some candidates merely produced travelogues, narrating the family's holiday chronologically with extensive personal reflections and descriptions of scenery.
- Some candidates needed to develop their article sufficiently within the 400-word limit, paragraphing their work and rounding off their articles appropriately, rather than ending abruptly.
- Some candidates needed to provide responses with greater accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation: 'For people it important to keep the body moving. Having the blood circulate inside your body. Maintaining good healthy.'
- Some candidates needed to find ways to engage the audience using a range of rhetorical devices.

#### **(b) Comprehensive responses**

- Candidates identified a range of features such as register, structure, pronouns, degree of formality, similes, rhetorical questions, semantic fields, connectives.
- Candidates were able to exemplify such features and provide some convincing analyses of their purpose and effects.
- Candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of key linguistic terminology.
- Some candidates used a Point, Evidence, Analysis format to analyse the form, structure and language of their responses to **Question 1(a)**.
- Candidates expanded on selected features of language, ensuring that comments and analysis were linked to audience and purpose.
- Candidates used relevant terminology consistently and confidently, using language precisely and appropriately, as in this example, where the analysis is detailed and focused: 'I used the phrase "family bonding" at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the article. The repetition and placing of this phrase created a cyclical structure which gave an impression of clear and thoughtful organisation.'

- Candidates were able to exemplify features and provide some convincing analyses of their purpose and effects, for example: 'In terms of form, my article first uses the key convention of using expert evidence to support my response. This is seen in the second paragraph when I mention that "A study done by researchers in Harvard" supports the idea that travel in foot can help improve the mental state of those who switch their type of transportation to walking.'
- Candidates were able to clearly identify and justify their linguistic choices. They were able to cite specific illustrations from their article and also explain their effects.

#### Limited responses

- Some candidates summarised or paraphrased what they had written in **Question 1(a)**, rather than analysing their choices.
- Some candidates provided brief, underdeveloped responses, which were limited in range.
- Some candidates wrote very short or very general answers, listing lots of features but with no adequate analysis of their effects, such as in these two examples: 'I used a lot of different punctuation in my text, like commas and question marks and!'; 'These punctuations make the text look more clearer.'
- Some candidates successfully named linguistic devices but only made a limited attempt to explain how a technique's use furthered the writer's purpose, as in this example: 'The use of triple "effort, practice and hardworking" allows the audience to see it can be a bit difficult but the triples allows the audience to persuade and make them reflect about it.'
- Candidates stated the obvious, such as: 'My writing has 5 paragraphs and I have used sentences to describe the benefits.'
- Some candidates confined themselves to very basic ideas, such as the fact that the text had subtitles and a title and paragraphs.
- Some candidates summarised or paraphrased what they had written rather than analysing their choices, for example: 'I used health as a way to convince my reader that walking is important. I believe that health was a good topic to talk on because people are sometimes scared that something will go wrong with their health when the vacation.'
- Some candidates needed to analyse how language choices achieved particular effects rather than relying on description or vague generalisations: 'to put a picture in the reader's mind', 'I used persuasive language' or 'I made it interesting'.
- Some candidates spent too much time in their responses articulating what they could have done better instead of analysing the choices they did make.
- Some candidates merely listed linguistic features they said they had used without any supporting evidence, for example: 'My speech contained figures of speech such as similes.'
- Some candidates used incorrect terminology, for example, showing confusion of the difference between 'metaphor' and 'simile.'
- Some candidates needed to be more precise in their discussion of sentence types and lengths of paragraph, avoiding being too general: 'The structure of my speech is paragraphs of varying length.'

### Section B

#### Question 2

##### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates showed accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation as well as in the use of complex lexis and structures.
- Candidates interwove description with dialogue, moving the story forward with a sense of place and character.
- Candidates displayed a strong sense of purpose from the outset, with a strong sense of voice in the central character.
- Candidates demonstrated considerable creativity in developing the narrative from the given opening with the box as a treasured heirloom, an important family keepsake, the key to a wider mystery, a magic portal, an enchanted object or a supernatural discovery hidden within the box.
- Candidates established an immediate atmosphere of suspense before gradually revealing the significance of the missing box.
- Candidates frequently employed flashbacks successfully to explain the importance of the box without interrupting the flow of the narrative.

- Some candidates provided satisfying resolutions, often revealing sentimental, family or symbolic meanings attached to the box, rather than relying on implausible twists.
- Many candidates used varied sentence structures, carefully selected vocabulary and sensory description very effectively: 'The counterpart creature, cupping its eyes and kneeling in agony, was bewildered. Mostly, it was terrified. Lara dropped the rosary and embraced the creature in front of her. The knife had long since been dropped and sat, useless, beside the retired rosary'.
- Candidates created convincing atmosphere through description of libraries, studies, old mansions, playgrounds and schools, allowing tension to build naturally as each location failed to produce the missing object.

#### Limited responses

- Some candidates needed to provide a complete story and to avoid unconvincingly inconclusive endings.
- Some candidates needed to develop a clearer voice in their stories.
- Some candidates needed to avoid too much plot at the expense of providing a convincing setting, some character development and credible dialogue.
- Some candidates relied heavily on action or plot, sometimes resolving the mystery too quickly and limiting opportunities to build suspense.
- Some candidates were too ambitious with their storyline, which resulted in a confusing story that was difficult to read or decipher.
- Some candidates needed to be more accurate with their grammatical constructions: 'The windows was huge and has vintage frame.'
- Some candidates needed to punctuate dialogue appropriately, for example, avoiding misplaced commas and quotation marks.
- Some candidates struggled with tense control in a flashback description, sometimes changing tense not only within a paragraph but within sentences, for example: 'Lara ran though the house desperately wondering where the box had been hidden. Luke looks up from his video game wondering what all the excitement is for. "What are you looking for Lara?" asked Luke.'
- Some candidates' narratives were a monotonous list of all the rooms and places in a house where the box could be hidden. 'She searched in the kitchen, under the sink, in the cupboards ...'
- Some candidates needed to provide greater cohesion by using appropriate connectives to link paragraphs, rather than moving abruptly from one paragraph to another.

#### Question 3

##### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates showed familiarity with a variety of games, which helped to create relevant and realistic reviews.
- Candidates displayed a clear, effective sense of voice, connecting with the reader using second-person pronouns.
- Candidates produced balanced reviews that combined description, evaluation and recommendation, while maintaining an engaging style appropriate to an entertainment website.
- Candidates often wrote a review of a simple game which made it easier to read for the reader.
- Candidates understood the conventions of a review, providing evaluative comments in the body of the response and summative comments at the end: 'Overall, this game was quite the experience. I had lofty expectations and it surpassed even those. With its expert use of story-telling elements, animation, graphics, gameplay and more, I will admit that I had a great time playing this.'
- Candidates included appropriate genre conventions of a review, such as title, sub-headings and rating.
- Candidates really focused on the 'family game night' section of the question and used this to introduce their review focus, without letting it predominate.
- Candidates adopted a credible reviewer's voice, for example: 'Per usual, I tested this for about a month to try out every feature it has to offer!'
- Candidates used gaming lexis with authority, such as: 'Overall, this game blew me away, with the details, graphics, game play etc. This game is worth every penny you spend.'

##### Limited responses

- Some candidates needed to provide a more balanced response, rather than focusing exclusively on positive features without considering any limitations, or vice versa.
- Some candidates used very informal language or an overly chatty style, showing limited awareness of audience and purpose. Others used repetitive evaluative language, relying heavily on words such as 'good' or 'fun' without further elaboration.

- Some candidates focused on video games and were sidetracked by the gaming they love rather than the interaction between families.
- Some candidates ended their reviews abruptly without providing a clear overall judgement or recommendation.
- Some candidates created simple descriptions of the game or personal accounts of playing it, with limited evaluation or awareness of conventions of reviews. Some wrote at length about the rules of the game and/or a specific game occasion that their family played, including names of the winners and losers, without addressing the evaluation sufficiently.
- Some candidates wrote with excessive informality and used non-standard, inaccurate writing that was limited in its expressiveness, for example: 'But even if you did not wanna or can play with others, the game is a great start to staring workouts there's hundreds of songs that give you real challenges and just being able to sing and dance to your favourite songs feels great!'

#### Question 4

##### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates demonstrated accuracy in their use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Candidates presented balanced arguments, maintained an engaging speech style and demonstrated clear awareness of audience, while encouraging further debate.
- Candidates included detailed examples for both sides of the debate and frequent audience direct address, to maintain the interest of the audience.
- Candidates supported their arguments with relevant examples drawn from schools, charities, community service, disaster relief and volunteering programmes before concluding with a clear and persuasive recommendation.
- Candidates showed a good knowledge of the subject and acquitted themselves well in terms of organisation, grammar and lexis, for example: 'Good afternoon, esteemed delegates and fellow schoolmates. We are gathered here today to address the matter whether it is more beneficial to either donate money to charity or to give your time by doing voluntary work.'
- Candidates included effective examples and anecdotes to support their discussion, such as: 'being able to look the people I am helping in the eyes makes the world of difference.'

##### Limited responses

- Some candidates needed to plan the response carefully to develop a cohesive argument and to avoid presenting a fragmented series of points.
- Some candidates' responses developed into discursive essays rather than speeches, with limited audience awareness and insufficient consideration of both sides of the argument.
- Some candidates' responses lacked examples to liven up the arguments presented.
- Some candidates wrote as if they were a main speaker and only addressed one side of the motion.
- Some candidates did not understand the grammatical framework of debate and made no reference to it: 'So is there a right answer? No there is no one correct answer there is need for both to helping others. There is no one over the over their is just who is affected more and for how long for it help them.'
- Some candidates' responses relied heavily on a limited number of points, which were repeated throughout the speech with little further development or evaluation.
- Some candidates used lengthy sentences linked by repeated conjunctions such as 'and', 'because' or 'so', which often reduced clarity and weakened the impact of the argument.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/12  
Writing

## Key messages

### **What candidates did well**

- Candidates managed their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper.
- Candidates read instructions in the questions and followed them carefully, to ensure that they wrote relevant content in the correct form.
- Candidates understood the importance of focusing on key words in the question.
- Candidates knew the conventions of different genres such as articles and reviews.
- Candidates were aware of the need for clear paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech.
- Candidates planned their ideas and organised extended responses logically.
- Candidates checked their responses and edited them for clarity, accuracy and completeness.
- Candidates showed an overall secure grasp of technical accuracy, particularly in spelling, punctuation and tense use.

### **What candidates needed to improve**

- Some candidates needed to provide more accuracy in sentence construction, spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Some candidates needed to plan more carefully to maintain focus on the task and address the intended audience and purpose.
- Some candidates were less adept at matching their register to the task.
- Some candidates restated ideas rather than developing them; this was particularly evident in the article and review tasks.
- Some candidates needed to strengthen consistency in tone, tense and register to enhance clarity and form across tasks.
- Some candidates needed to write more legibly and clearly to ensure communication was not impeded.
- Some candidates needed to proofread carefully, particularly for accurate sentence demarcation and for tense confusion/inconsistency. Such oversights impeded, sometimes seriously, the overall sense of fluency and cohesion.
- Some candidates needed to strengthen their language analysis by focusing on the effects of specific words rather than merely naming devices.
- Some candidates needed to be able to be consistent in their use of tenses, some switching from past to present (or vice versa) in the same paragraph and even, sometimes, in the same sentence.
- Some candidates needed to be more assured in the conventions of punctuating dialogue.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

##### **(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Candidates created a sense of drama and suspense, establishing tension through deliberately controlled pacing and description.
- Candidates wrote clearly, with accuracy and control of grammar and structure.

- Candidates used a range of vocabulary and sentence types including some complex lexis and structures.
- Candidates displayed a strong sense of purpose from the outset, with a strong sense of voice in the central character.
- Candidates used language choices and sentence structures deliberately to create and maintain suspense, for example: 'There were no humans, just him. Only him. Bare walls, yellow walls, pipes climbing the wall ... and no ceiling.'
- Candidates interwove description with dialogue, moving the story forward with a sense of place and character.
- Candidates effectively used imagery and emotional descriptors to ensure their audience was captivated, for example: 'The hoarse, eerie shriek came again. He took a weak step towards the door.'
- Candidates sometimes opened with tense dialogue, creating a strong terrifying atmosphere.
- Some candidates utilised short, choppy sentences to show agitation and fear associated with what was just behind the door.
- Candidates wrote story openings with limited events and characters and a manageably tight timescale.

#### Limited responses

- Candidates needed to focus more on basic grammar and punctuation, including sentence demarcation.
- Some candidates introduced unnecessary background information, reducing the dramatic impact of the story opening.
- Some candidates relied on action alone rather than building atmosphere and suspense.
- Some candidates lost focus on the instruction to write the opening of a story and developed the narrative up to its resolution.
- Some candidates needed to provide responses with greater accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation: 'John held his breath as he finally realised this is not going to end very well, and tonight might cause him some life threatening trauma as he kept his eyes onto that thing, he slowly but steadily made his way.'
- Some candidates were too ambitious with their storyline and included a very unrealistic chain of events, with minimal description or characterisation.
- Some candidates' story openings were completely unparagraphed.

(b)

#### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates identified a range of features such as sentence variety, imagery, lexical selection and punctuation, and showed how these features created suspense and engaged readers.
- Candidates were able to exemplify such features and provide some convincing analyses of their purpose and effects.
- Candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of key linguistic terminology.
- Some candidates used a Point, Evidence, Analysis format to analyse the form, structure and language of their responses to **Question 1(a)**.
- Candidates expanded on selected features of language, ensuring that comments and analysis were linked to audience and purpose.
- Candidates used relevant terminology consistently and confidently, using language precisely and appropriately, as in this example, where the analysis is detailed and focused: 'An emphasis on time 'the footsteps, lasting centuries ...' was made through the use of lexis related to time such as 'inevitable' and 'centuries'. The dramatic setting was set through descriptive sentences of the 'sudden noises' as John started to 'lose himself'.'
- Candidates were able to exemplify features and provide some convincing analyses of their purpose and effects, for example: 'The metaphor of 'going blank' represents the 'flight or fight' state that the character is in. The effect of drama is further expressed by the crowd 'exploding' with a 'roar' conveying the sense of a wild crowd that represents people who act primitive, thus creating a distance between John and them'.
- Candidates were able to clearly identify and justify their linguistic choices. They were able to cite specific illustrations from their article and also explain their effects.

#### Limited responses

- Some candidates summarised or paraphrased what they had written in **Question 1(a)**, rather than analysing their choices.
- Some candidates provided brief, underdeveloped responses, which were limited in range.

- Some candidates wrote very short or very general answers, listing features but with no adequate analysis of their effects, such as in these two examples: 'I used descriptive language to make the readers more engaged'; 'I wanted to create suspense.'
- Some candidates successfully named linguistic devices but only made a limited attempt to explain how a technique's use furthered the writer's purpose, as in this example: 'The use of triple "effort, practice and hardworking" allows the audience to see it can be a bit difficult but the triples allows the audience to persuade and make them reflect about it.'
- Some candidates made broad or vague comments: 'I used very detailed and simple words making it very clear and understandable for all types of the reader or the audience. Text shows every detail a story needs for example a drama and suspense, it is create to make the story more interesting and engaging for audience.'
- Some candidates wrote in general, vague terms about the craft of writing: 'The text as written through a modality of descriptive and spatial development.'
- Some candidates neglected to use specific quotations from their writing to demonstrate the points they were making.
- Candidates stated the obvious, such as: 'My writing has 5 paragraphs and I have used sentences to describe the benefits.'
- Some candidates confined themselves to very basic ideas, such as the fact that the story had a title and paragraphs.
- Some candidates summarised or paraphrased what they had written rather than analysing their choices.
- Some candidates needed to analyse how language choices achieved particular effects rather than relying on description or vague generalisations: 'to put a picture in the reader's mind', 'I used figurative language' or 'I made it suspenseful by adding suspense.'
- Some candidates spent too much time in their responses articulating what they could have done better instead of analysing the choices they did make.
- Some candidates merely listed linguistic features they said they had used without any supporting evidence, for example: 'My speech contained figures of speech such as personification.'
- Some candidates used incorrect terminology, for example, showing confusion of the difference between 'metaphor' and 'simile'.
- Some candidates needed to be more precise in their discussion of sentence types and lengths of paragraph, avoiding being too general: 'My story is structured in paragraphs of varying length.'
- Some candidates did not attempt the question and some responses were brief or incomplete, with little analysis or development.

## Section B

### Question 2

#### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates displayed a good level of knowledge about the topic, which helped to create relevant and realistic reviews.
- Candidates displayed a clear, effective sense of voice, connecting with the reader using second-person pronouns.
- Candidates sometimes established the form through use of a headline, such as: 'Plastic Pollution – a shocking revelation.'
- Candidates produced balanced reviews that combined description, evaluation and recommendation, while maintaining a style appropriate to an environmental website.
- Candidates included appropriate genre conventions of a review, such as title, sub-headings and rating.
- Candidates used real-world examples to support their review, for example: 'an island of plastic that is the size of Texas'; 'the record breaking documentary by Alex Gonzales.'
- Candidates understood the conventions of a review, providing evaluative comments in the body of the response and summative comments at the end: 'This documentary didn't sugarcoat the truth that today, with every second, Earth is indeed 'Becoming a Wasteland' and if we lack the compassion to change for ourselves we at least owe it to the millions of other species on earth who do not deserve this fate'.
- Candidates adopted a credible reviewer's voice, for example: 'Despite the high quality environmental videos, the documentary included specific and 2026 statistics to it, unlike other documentaries that use old statistics. The facts and data are shown by clear diagrams and charts, and the reporter sums it up in a clear conclusion, making it accessible and understandable to people.'

### Limited responses

- Some candidates needed to provide a more balanced response, rather than focusing exclusively on positive features without considering any limitations, or vice versa.
- Some candidates used very informal language or an overly chatty style, showing limited awareness of audience and purpose.
- Some candidates needed to maintain an appropriate register for an online review and avoid drifting towards speech writing or a discursive essay.
- Some candidates approached the task as a cause-effect essay based on environmental issues related to the disposal of plastics rather than a review.
- Some candidates wrote at length about the problems caused by using plastic, without addressing the evaluation of the programme sufficiently: 'Here what should we do, we need to use more paper like items which is easily destroy even when throw away comparing to plastic which is long lasting. Different types of dustbins like plastic, glass and recyclable items.'
- Some candidates simply summarised what happened in a chronological, step-by-step manner, tracking the documentary from introduction to end: 'After the introduction the documentary begins to explain the danger of plastic ... After explaining the problems caused by plastics, the documenter invites further explain the what would happen in the future.'
- Some candidates needed greater accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling, for example: 'Most of the time this trash ends up in the landfills and waterbodies.'; 'By doing this we harm the marine life.'; 'Although this is a good documentary with many countries.'

### Question 3

#### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates often combined description effectively with some narration but did not veer away from the requirements of the question.
- Candidates explored sound, movement, colour, smell, touch and taste, describing features such as carousels, escalators, tannoy announcements, luggage, airport protocols and the behaviour of travellers and children.
- Candidates sometimes took an imaginative approach to description such as describing the pictures on the walls.
- Candidates used effective vocabulary and used literary devices well.
- Candidates created an atmosphere in a vivid, engaging way, for example: 'The occasional pops and clinks of champagne glasses and bottles did not fill the air but rather added to the atmosphere of opulence, one of elite (sic) and exclusivity.'
- Candidates described sensory details such as 'fragrant, fresh cup of coffee', 'heat and sweat radiating from crowds' and 'the most delicious, mouth-watering dish.'
- Candidates created a strong sense of atmosphere through varied sensory imagery and precise vocabulary, interweaving the different senses rather than dealing with them separately.
- Candidates focused on specific things, for example, on the 'annoying' sounds of the children, babies as well as machinery and equipment used at the airport.
- Candidates used themes such as excitement, sadness or fear throughout their text to bind disparate descriptions, often from a particular persona's perspective.
- Candidates sometimes successfully conveyed the contrasting emotions associated with departures, including excitement, anxiety and sadness: 'The sounds of anger and exasperation, groans and shouts, directed at phones or at the staff become common as time passes on. The staff's calm, flat and tired voices are ever present in the background as they converse with passengers.'
- Candidates sometimes focused on the various emotions involved in waiting, conveying them vividly: 'The only time the constant hustle and bustle stops is when every ten minutes the announcements ring through your ears with a visible hope uplifting everyone's eyes hoping their departure time has arrived. Once the announcement stops, the walking, stomping, crying, laughing – it all continues.'

#### Limited responses

- Some candidates focused on narrative rather than description, limiting the effectiveness of their responses and failing to sustain a descriptive atmosphere.
- Some responses relied on only one or two senses, rather than exploring the wider atmosphere of the departure lounge, including aspects such as air quality, seating and stress levels.
- Some candidates produced brief responses with limited development of ideas.
- Some candidates wrote purely narrative pieces, sometimes elaborating on the events preceding their arrival at the departure hall.

- Some candidates needed to vary their word choices: many descriptions were basic and bland, such as: 'the blue sky' or 'the big white plane in the window'.
- Some candidates listed items, rather than describing a departure hall, thus producing rather fragmented responses, for example: 'The high ceiling echoed with sounds. The crowd moved slowly in a long snaking line. It was a lovely day.'
- Some candidates needed greater accuracy in sentence construction, grammar, punctuation and spelling, for example: 'I had got down the taxi, loading suitcases on the airport trolley. Car horns everywhere indicating each other to leave some space for themselves. I pushed the grey trolley into the airport as The staffs check my passport.'
- Some candidates wrote whole paragraphs of participial phrases, rather than complete sentences: 'The noises of luggage being dragged across the floor, scraping it, the instructions of the flight attendee's, the chatter of people all around you. Non stop loud noises and babies crying.'
- Some candidates focused mainly on visual description and neglected sound or movement.
- Some candidates needed to use more complex lexis and structures.

#### Question 4

##### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates demonstrated accuracy in their use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Candidates produced some well-written and passionately argued essays, almost without exception in favour of money education.
- Candidates used effective conventions such as headlines, by-lines, sub-headings and engaging opening hooks, for example: 'Children's Education on Money: Just How Important is it?'
- Candidates considered issues such as budgeting, financial planning, taxes, accommodation, future careers and responsible spending, often referring to financial experts or economists to add credibility.
- Candidates developed a range of well-supported arguments and engaged readers through rhetorical questions and relevant examples, for example: 'So why not learn about it sooner, at a younger age, here at our very own school?'
- Candidates displayed a wide knowledge of financial and educational matters, for example: 'A monthly budgeting plan helps solve financial problems', 'A modernisation of the trade is the introduction of money' and 'candidates should be made aware of cutting unnecessary costs.'
- Candidates demonstrated not only interest and ability to discuss the topic in depth, but also critical thinking, and they presented convincing evaluations, for example: 'A society that is financially literate is likely to have more savings, less debt, more people starting businesses and accumulating wealth. When a group of people is financially invested in the future, the economy can grow.'
- Candidates maintained an appropriate register for a school magazine and engaged readers through persuasive language, rhetorical questions and relevant examples, addressing principally the concerns of their peers but also considering the parent segment of the total audience.
- Candidates successfully included facts, statistics and anecdotes to lend credibility to their article.
- Candidates' articles had well thought out sub-headings to separate pieces of information in their article.
- Candidates showed evidence of thoughtful planning.

##### Limited responses

- Some candidates wrote an article about money without any focus on whether children should be taught about it or wrote generally about learning about money from other sources, such as parents.
- Some candidates approached the task from a very personal perspective, describing their own experience with money, instead of writing an article on a wider discussion of the necessity or otherwise of educating children about money at school.
- Some candidates' work was disjointed with minimal attempt to organise responses into paragraphs.
- Some candidates stated opinions without developing or supporting them with convincing reasoning.
- Some candidates misinterpreted the prompt and elaborated on the negative effects of school or just wrote an advice piece on how important it is to manage finances.
- Some candidates needed to provide a clear structure to avoid repetition of comments or presenting one-sided arguments without acknowledging alternative viewpoints.
- Some candidates could not differentiate between the task of writing an article and an essay and therefore wrote a response with no attempt to engage an audience of peers.
- Some candidates focused only on one side of the argument, limiting the balance of their discussion.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/13  
Writing

## Key messages

### **What candidates did well**

- Candidates managed their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper.
- Candidates read instructions in the questions and followed them carefully, to ensure that they wrote relevant content in the correct form.
- Candidates understood the importance of focusing on key words in the question.
- Candidates knew the conventions of different genres such as emails, essays and reviews.
- Candidates were aware of the need for clear paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech.
- Candidates planned their ideas and organised extended responses logically.
- Candidates checked their responses and edited them for clarity, accuracy and completeness.
- Candidates showed an overall secure grasp of technical accuracy, particularly in spelling, punctuation and tense use.

### **What candidates needed to improve**

- Some candidates needed to provide more accuracy in sentence construction, spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Some candidates needed to plan more carefully to maintain focus on the task and address the intended audience and purpose.
- Some candidates were less adept at matching their register to the task.
- Some candidates restated ideas rather than developing them. This was particularly evident in the essay and review tasks.
- Some candidates needed to strengthen consistency in tone, tense and register to enhance clarity and form across tasks.
- Some candidates needed to write more legibly and clearly to ensure communication was not impeded.
- Some candidates needed to proofread carefully, particularly for accurate sentence demarcation and for tense confusion/inconsistency. Such oversights impeded, sometimes seriously, the overall sense of fluency and cohesion.
- Some candidates needed to strengthen their language analysis by focusing on the effects of specific words rather than merely naming devices.
- Some candidates needed to be able to be consistent in their use of tenses, some switching from past to present (or vice versa) in the same paragraph and even, sometimes, in the same sentence.
- Some candidates needed to be more assured in the conventions of punctuating dialogue.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

##### **(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Candidates wrote clearly, with accuracy and control of grammar and structure.
- Candidates used a range of vocabulary and sentence types including some complex lexis and structures.

- Candidates displayed knowledge of sleep science and well-being advice to teenagers, with references such as ‘circadian rhythm’.
- Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the required format and addressed the editor and the imagined article they were responding to appropriately, for example: ‘Your analysis on the “busyness” of schoolwork was truly insightful’.
- Candidates used conventions of the genre such as case study, anecdotes, experts and facts/statistics to support their ideas.
- Candidates used coherent paragraphing, effective topic sentences and a consistent register.
- Candidates made creative and critical reference to the original article: ‘I recently read a piece on your website called ‘Are Kids Up Too Late’, but I must say that you have missed many factors and undermined key elements of a young person’s life.’
- Candidates engaged directly with the claims made in the original article and developed thoughtful counter-arguments, for example: ‘However, it is not fair to claim that these experiences all stem from ‘improper time management’, as you wrote in your article. The truth is – especially in academically rigorous or competitive schools – sleeping eight hours a night is virtually impossible for many candidates.’
- Candidates showed an awareness of the need to present a balanced view of the subject matter: ‘However, I can’t help but agree that, despite the studying, “staying up only really hurts you in the end.”’
- Candidates made recommendations: ‘Even better, include interviews and anecdotes from young adults themselves’ and ‘The concentration of teenaged individuals’ usage and nighttime electronic usage would be a lovely piece of data.’
- Candidates sometimes adopted the voice of parents or teachers effectively.
- Candidates consistently used a range of language to create a compelling voice, which gave their responses a personal and engaging tone.

#### **Limited responses**

- Some candidates needed to focus more on basic grammar and punctuation, including sentence demarcation.
- Some candidates needed to appreciate that a newspaper editor is unlikely to be the author of the original article.
- Some candidates wrote an overview of young people’s lives but were not focused on the task; some focused more on technology generally and how it impacts young people.
- Some candidates had no notion of formality or relative status, writing too informally: ‘Your newspaper article did a good job.’
- Some candidates needed to develop their responses fully, such as in short paragraphs like this: ‘Sleeping is a preventer of eyebags, puffy face for some etc.’
- Some candidates adopted an overly confrontational or informal register, reducing the effectiveness of the email and limiting their engagement with the intended audience. For example, ‘I would like to talk about the inconsistencies and utter misinformation getting spewed out in your news article.’
- Some candidates expressed valid counter-arguments but lacked precision and control of language, resulting in awkward expression, grammatical inaccuracies and less convincing communication, for example: ‘While Yes some Young People do Stay up to late every night, I do not think that it was ok for you to go and blame everyone on young people.’
- Some candidates identified relevant issues but did not develop their ideas sufficiently or support them with convincing evidence, for example: ‘Also, when you say “sources say” it makes readers wonder who “sources” is, leading us to not trust the information given. Give an example of the source like name the website or the expert specifically.’

(b)

#### **Comprehensive responses**

- Candidates clearly explained how their linguistic choices were appropriate for the purpose, audience and form of the task, linking their comments directly to the email they had written.
- Candidates identified a range of features such as register, structure, degree of formality, semantic fields and connectives.
- Candidates were able to exemplify such features and provide some convincing analyses of their purpose and effects.
- Candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of key linguistic terminology.
- Some candidates used a Point, Evidence, Analysis format to analyse the form, structure and language of their responses to **Question 1(a)**.

- Candidates expanded on selected features of language, ensuring that comments and analysis were linked to audience and purpose.
- Candidates insightfully explored figurative language, such as metaphors, and explained how these enhanced engagement and clarity.
- Candidates used language precisely and appropriately, as in this example, where the analysis is detailed and focused: 'In text A, the author utilizes formal language such as "regarding" and "concerns" in order to appear to the editor of the article as being professional and knowledgeable. These higher-level diction choices allow the editor or the audience to take the person writing the email seriously, especially because they're advocating for young people who are oftentimes not taken seriously.'
- Candidates used relevant terminology consistently and confidently, such as in this example of a candidate analysing a courteous tone used to address the probable wider readership of the newspaper: 'Despite this article presenting younger people as negative, the author maintains a neutral and even intellectual tone, suggesting that there are "potential inaccuracies in a well-presented article" to avoid potentially offending the original author.'

#### Limited responses

- Some candidates summarised or paraphrased what they had written in **Question 1(a)**, rather than analysing their choices.
- Some candidates provided brief, underdeveloped responses, limited in range.
- Some candidates wrote very short or very general answers, listing features, sometimes wrongly, but with no adequate analysis of their effects, such as in this example: 'I created a respectful relationship by using second person pronouns such as 'I' and we'.
- Some candidates' responses relied on general assertions about language choices without supporting them with specific examples or clear analysis. For example, 'I make use of a conversationalism in discussing to set the editor's perspective.'
- Some candidates described the features of their writing rather than analysing how their linguistic choices fulfilled the task. For example, 'This email contains the main characteristics it should in relation to email structure and content. This email is concise, to the point, and is organised logically.'
- Some candidates commented on purpose or register in broad terms but did not develop how particular linguistic choices achieved this, for example: 'You must, as I did, keep it semi-formal while also meeting your goals. The goal of my writing was to persuade the reader to change their perspective on the topic of young people not sleeping enough.'
- Some candidates merely listed linguistic features they said they had used without any supporting evidence, for example: 'My email contained hyperboles and statistics to make it clearer.'
- Some candidates used incorrect terminology, for example, showing confusion of the difference between 'first person' and 'second person'.
- Some candidates needed to be more precise in their discussion of sentence types and lengths of paragraph, avoiding being too general: 'The structure of my email is different length paragraphs.'

### Section B

#### Question 2

##### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates used their personal experience to help to create relevant content.
- Candidates explored the wider social and psychological implications of family size through logical reasoning and conceptual thinking, for example, arguing that: 'Studies have shown repeatedly that this is incredibly detrimental to their mental health, with many older siblings reporting anxiety disorders in their teenage years.'
- Candidates provided a balanced argument, exploring the pros and cons of each position and then coming to a decision at the end of their essay, presenting a clear and convincing judgement.
- Candidates often concluded by synthesising their arguments rather than simply repeating earlier points, for example: 'To summarize what has previously been stated, family is arguably the most important aspect in one's life ...'
- Candidates tried to present all that an essay should have: hook, introduction providing a little context of their own family situation and beliefs, body paragraphs with individualised topic sentences, conclusion.
- Candidates made complex lexical choices such as 'noxious', 'abhorrent', 'shambolic'.

- Candidates strengthened their arguments by integrating relevant examples, statistics and research, for example: 'According to a study conducted by Dr. Christine Palmer, over eighty percent of people who only have one sibling consider their sibling to be their best friend.'
- Candidates employed an appropriate academic tone and suitably complex lexis and structures in their essay.
- Candidates structured their responses logically, ensuring key points could be clearly identified by the reader. Reliance on 'data' or 'studies' did not dominate; rather, candidates consistently expressed their own point of view.

### Limited responses

- Some candidates needed to evidence greater control of language, with errors affecting clarity and precision, for example: 'The problem with small families comes from that smaller number. It feels better to connect with someone outside of your parents and friends that are still family.'
- Some candidates ran out of material and then repeated points while others offered a very safe approach listing pros and cons of each but with very limited and repetitive sentences, for example: 'One advantage of a large family is ... A second advantage of a large family is ... A third, etc.'
- Some candidates began very abruptly: 'There are many arguments on which is better. Growing up with a large family is better cause you have more people to rely on.'
- Some candidates relied totally on personal opinion or anecdotal observations rather than constructing a balanced, reasoned discussion.
- Some candidates needed to plan the response carefully to develop a cohesive argument and to avoid presenting a fragmented series of points.
- Some candidates wrote in a register which was too informal for an essay: 'Some want large and some want small including me so it all comes down to what you prefer and would rather want to be in. So what would you want to be in and have?'
- Some candidates relied heavily on invented studies, thereby losing sight of their own point of view and voice.
- Some candidates needed to use more complex lexis and structures.

### Question 3

#### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates adopted a confident, engaging review style, establishing context before moving into a balanced evaluation, for example: 'To start, Badges is a project unlike anything Schwartz has taken on before.'
- Candidates displayed a clear, effective sense of voice, connecting with the reader using second-person pronouns.
- Candidates supported their opinions with well-developed, specific examples, producing balanced and convincing reviews rather than simple summaries.
- Candidates combined an account of the drama series content, evaluation and recommendation, while maintaining a style appropriate to an entertainment website.
- Candidates sometimes engaged the audience through use of a headline, such as: 'And the killer was the gardener.'
- Candidates used occasional short sentences to good effect: 'It's wacky, zany and every other synonym there is.'
- Candidates successfully combined an informal style appropriate to an entertainment website with the ability to include the evaluative elements needed for a review, for example: 'The "incompetent high-ranking official" trope might seem a bit overused to some, but Detective Dickinson always manages to surprise me.'
- Candidates produced reviews that evaluated both strengths and weaknesses rather than simply recounting the plot. One candidate concluded: 'While the plot itself is great and has that signature Schwartz twist, the lack of character development and obvious clichés did not support this format.'
- Candidates understood the conventions of a review, providing evaluative comments in the body of the response and summative comments at the end: 'Detective Smith is one of the best shows Netflix has released in a long while and you should most certainly check it out. Now you'll excuse me as I click the rewind button to watch this masterpiece again ...'

### Limited responses

- Some candidates needed to provide a more balanced response, rather than focusing exclusively on positive features without considering any limitations, or vice versa.
- Some candidates needed to include more descriptive and evaluative vocabulary, as some responses remained basic and lacked precise expression.
- Some candidates needed to maintain an appropriate register for an online review and avoid drifting towards speech writing or a discursive essay.
- Some candidates focused on a narrative about the police with no real review or opinion; they listed reasons why someone would watch a show but there was no real focus or development.
- Some candidates could not find much to say and so, rather than reviewing film style and technique or comparing the detective series with others, they only produced short reviews.
- Some candidates showed a lack of clear organisation in their reviews; for example, they did not use subheadings to give a shape to their reviews.
- Some candidates simply summarised what happened in the programme without providing elements of a review and their own opinions.
- Some candidates needed greater accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling, for example: 'My first thoughts on this show I had high hopes it first came out on Netflix the first couple seasons then began airing a couple seasons.'

### Question 4

#### Comprehensive responses

- Candidates demonstrated accuracy in their use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Candidates displayed a strong sense of purpose from the outset, with a strong sense of voice in the central character.
- Candidates created an engaging opening that immediately established tension and uncertainty, effectively developing on the prompt given: 'Although it wasn't much of a choice to make, I could either run and potentially die or stay frozen and absolutely die'.
- Candidates used a wide variety of situations for their choice-making, often being in an impossible situation such as a kidnap and being petrified and unable to choose: "'Have you made your choice yet?" he snarls. I can't move, my dry, cracked lips don't dare utter a word.'
- Candidates also devised other situations, including choosing between saving yourself or your tribes in a dystopia; deciding which parent to live with in a divorce case, and whether to make the romantic choice of marriage or pursue fashion and design training.
- Candidates explored the internal conflict of emotions as well as the external conflict with the environment, for example, writing about finding an injured girl on a mountain: 'In this moment I hated the girl. Extending my stiff legs, I grabbed the snow board and placed it parallel next to the girl. Gingerly, I looped my arms under her back and lifted her leaden body onto my temporary stretcher.'
- Candidates used literary devices to intensify their writing, for example: 'the count of lives that hovered in the decision, like countless books in the path of fire.'
- Candidates created convincing atmosphere through vivid sensory description and carefully selected imagery, for example: 'My hair began to stand up, my gut was screaming at me to get out of the area, and I had the unshakeable feeling that I was being stalked.'
- Candidates sustained tension through precise description and effective character reactions rather than relying solely on action.
- Candidates used vivid and descriptive language effectively to create atmosphere and tension: 'The stiff white paper stared at me, boldly, as if daring me to take it'.
- Candidates controlled pacing effectively by alternating moments of action with reflective description, building anticipation throughout, for example, 'We froze, solid as stone, the world seemed quiet after that strange roar. I became aware of an echo in my ears, 'bum bum bum bum' that kept repeating.'

#### Limited responses

- Some candidates needed to provide a complete story and to avoid unconvincingly inconclusive endings.
- Some candidates needed to develop a clearer voice in their stories.
- Some candidates needed to avoid too much plot at the expense of providing a convincing setting, some character development and credible dialogue.
- Some candidates needed to observe clear sentence demarcation in order to allow some fluency of expression: 'Rocks kept falling many hit me on my back some left nothing but scratches will others more heavier bruised me.'
- Some candidates left the story on a cliffhanger or ellipsis, thereby not fulfilling the requirement for a complete story.

- Some candidates' stories had no sense of drama or suspense with too much explanation of the narrator's situation.
- Some candidates included action but did not control language sufficiently to create a convincing narrative voice, for example: 'Kill or be killed? I choose kill. I aim a fire and hit. Then I leup out of the bus and run.'
- Some candidates needed to punctuate dialogue appropriately, for example, avoiding misplaced commas and quotation marks.
- Some candidates needed to plan and organise their stories more effectively to enable the reader to clearly follow the sequence of events.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/21

Drama, Poetry and Prose Paper

## Key messages

### What candidates did well

- Candidates who performed particularly well in the **(a)** questions clearly had at least a sound knowledge of events, themes and characters and their relationships to each other (Albee, John and Shakespeare).
- In the **(b)** questions, many candidates covered the whole of the passage, selecting key points rather than giving equal weight to every line, resulting in a clearer, more competently analytical approach.
- The majority of candidates showed evidence of appropriate preparation in selecting relevant material with which to address the given tasks and often had at least a straightforward knowledge of their two texts.
- Some candidates confidently drew interesting, sometimes perceptive, contrasts between characters, particularly in the Albee and John responses.
- Many candidates integrated references to language, rhythm and imagery into an overall interpretation, leading to more relevant points and a more structured approach.

### What candidates needed to improve

- When discussing dramatic texts, candidates could have shown more understanding of the effects of dramatic devices behind ideas of 'presentation', remembering that an audience would be present during a performance and dramatic devices are designed to produce particular dramatic effects, often communicated through careful stage directions.
- The ability to analyse a text could be further developed, to improve confidence when applying and discussing a wide range of literary methods and their effects, for example a clearer understanding of dramatic irony.
- Creating a more balanced response to **Section A** questions: giving detailed attention to both poems instead of reducing the second to a brief, concluding paragraph, as seen in Songs and Angelou would improve structural approach.
- Some candidates need to focus more on the detail of the given passages in option **(b)** questions, instead of using an overly summative approach which leads to narrating and explaining rather than analysing.
- Incorporating a more secure contextual knowledge into relevant sections of essays would help some candidates develop a clearer basis for argument and analysis. A little more understanding of the characters' circumstances at particular points in the text would help in developing fuller responses in drama essays, for example.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section A Drama

#### EDWARD ALBEE: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf

#### Question 1

##### **(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Explored Honey as both comic relief and a deeply vulnerable character, considering how audience sympathy for her shifts throughout the play.
- Analysed Albee's dramatic methods, including dialogue, silence, physical behaviour and Honey's positioning within the stage action.

- Considered Honey's function as a foil to Martha and the ways in which her apparent innocence exposes the failures within both marriages, connecting them through wealthy fathers and the lack of children and therefore a failure to live up to an idealised version of woman as mother.
- Understood that Honey was seen as less a character than a representative of the submissive woman admired at the time and noted her characterisation through the choice of name and the physical description as 'slim-hipped'.
- Considered her fear of childbirth, reliance on drink, and the 'hysterical' marriage dynamic (including her claim to be pregnant).
- Analysed the significance of her peeling off labels in the bathroom and how her addiction to alcohol revealed more of who she really was, culminating in the outburst of 'violence' and the 'desperate' desire she expressed to have children showing a conflict between her own feelings and societal expectations.
- Explored the effects on the audience of the revelations of why Nick married her, her fear of childbearing and the use of 'slimness' as a euphemism.

#### **Limited responses**

- Retold Honey's actions throughout the play with limited discussion of audience response, rather than simply describing her personality.
- Made generalisations on context without using it to inform the response.
- Offered a two-dimensional character study, often focusing on one aspect only such as her drunkenness and saw her as young, sweet and naive with no intelligence or power.
- Considered the symbolism of her name and her 'hips' in simple terms, sometimes, for example, suggesting she was the perfect body shape for childbearing.

(b)

#### **Comprehensive responses**

- Explored how comedy operates alongside discomfort and emotional cruelty, recognising the extract as an example of dark comedy which is used as a weapon throughout the play.
- Focused on the language choices for example, the belittling of Nick through the diminutive, subservient 'houseboy'; the sexual 'gigolo' and the mocking praise of 'attaboy'.
- Analysed interruptions, repetition, timing and shifting power dynamics to show how comic moments simultaneously heighten tension and how comedy becomes uncomfortable, building tension toward the revelation that the 'son' is non-existent.
- Knew the text in terms of references to the liaison between Nick and Martha and the comment in response to 'screw baby' and the references to the 'son' of George and Martha being imaginary.
- Made informed reference to absurdist theatre and were aware of 'the games' and how George initiates the final game.
- Understood Martha and her relationship with Nick.
- Analysed how comedy was used alongside conflict and tension and made the scene comical and light-hearted, as well as dark and disturbing.
- Used context wisely, for example linking the American Dream to the extract through societal expectations of marriage and wives.

#### **Limited responses**

- Treated the extract in isolation, not showing awareness of the wider text.
- Identified humorous moments without exploring their dramatic effects in detail, with some responses only describing events, then stating they would make the audience laugh.
- Worked sequentially through the extract, paraphrasing with minimal analysis.
- Had some misunderstandings about characters and their relationships.
- Wrote brief answers and/or failed to address the extract's ending.
- Misunderstood the role of stage directions within the drama genre and misread some points, such as the use of 'baby', seen as an indication that Martha or Honey was pregnant.
- Found it difficult to understand some of the mockery and sarcasm, suggesting, for example, that Nick was George's son.

**ERROL JOHN: Moon on a Rainbow Shawl**

**Question 2**

**(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Compared contrasting expectations of marriage across different generations and social circumstances.
- Explored how marriage is presented as both emotional fulfilment and economic necessity within the community.
- Related the issue of marriage to the contexts of poverty and low expectations, for example, celebrating Mavis for her realism.
- Distinguished between the attitudes appropriately, so that for example, Mavis and Rosa saw marriage as an escape route from societal stigma while for Sophia it was for love and required a grim stoicism.
- Used historical and geographical contexts appropriately to inform their arguments.
- Analysed some of John's dramatic methods with perception and confidence to support the arguments made.

**Limited responses**

- Produced general essays about relationships and characters without maintaining the focus on marriage.
- Relied heavily on plot summary and narrative with limited discussion of John's dramatic methods.
- Explored the key idea of marriage in an undeveloped way, for example seeing it only as a shackle or a 'trap'.
- Offered narrative accounts of relationships, giving limited attention to John's methods and choices.
- Presented unsupported personal responses as arguments, for example, treating characters as real people rather than analysing dramatic construction.

**(b) Comprehensive responses**

- Explored the contrast between Epf's practicality and Rosa's aspirations through dialogue, gesture and stage directions.
- Considered how humour and everyday domestic interaction reveal underlying tensions within their relationship.
- Made effective use of contextual details.
- Analysed how John exposes Epf's hypocrisy, contrasting his friendliness and warmth to Esther with his selfishness, cruelty and misogyny towards Rosa.
- Analysed John's presentation of Rosa here in the context of her later actions and her relationship with Old Mack.
- Analysed the development of conflict and the rapidly changing emotional atmosphere, commenting for example, on how John's use of interruptions and escalating accusations heightened tension.
- Understood the scene's dynamics, for example the use of music to explore stagecraft effectively.
- Connected the extract's significance to the wider play, including textual context around pregnancy and marriage.
- Understood the contrast between Epf's cold, resolute self-preservation and Rosa's naivety in telling the police about the hat and believing the revelation of her pregnancy will reverse Epf's decision to leave.

**Limited responses**

- Had a limited knowledge and understanding of the text, for example discussing Epf and Rosa as a husband and wife.
- Confused the nature of their relationship, leading to inaccurate interpretations of character motivation.
- Focused primarily on events rather than analysing dramatic presentation.
- Worked through the scene descriptively with limited analysis, often commenting on characters as real people.
- Showed limited understanding of stage directions within the dramatic genre.

- Treated this as an unseen, not knowing details of who Epf, Rosa, Charlie and Old Mack are in the play as a whole.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Tempest**

### **Question 3**

#### **(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Examined Caliban's dramatic function in challenging ideas of civilisation, power, colonialism and legitimacy.
- Communicated an understanding that Caliban functions as the play's moral mirror, forcing the audience to question what it actually means to be 'civilised' and to ask ourselves who the real monsters in the play are.
- Considered how Shakespeare uses Caliban to create both sympathy and unease, resulting in a complex audience response.
- Explored ways in which he is a victim of colonialism, brutally abused by Prospero and damaged to the extent of believing he cannot be independent, needs a master even if it is the lowly Stephano and Trinculo.
- Addressed Caliban's awareness of beauty and the complexity of his relationship with Prospero by referring to 'this isle is full of noises' with its possible implications and commenting on the significance of 'this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine'.
- Considered his desires toward Miranda and how these complicate his role, suggesting that while he is a victim, it still does not excuse his savage behaviour towards Miranda.
- Analysed a range of Shakespeare's dramatic methods, including language, stage directions and physical appearance, showing the effects of these choices.
- Integrated appropriate contextual points to support and develop their arguments.

#### **Limited responses**

- Listed everything they knew about Caliban rather than focusing on his dramatic significance or Shakespeare's presentation.
- Gave a one-sided view, focused on Caliban's personal qualities without considering his wider contribution to the play's meanings and dramatic effects.
- Treated Caliban solely as a symbol of colonial oppression without considering his dramatic role within the action of the play.
- Had limited knowledge and understanding of the play so that textual detail and quotation was restricted and generalised, with some details of the play unclear for example that Prospero killed Sycorax.
- Showed limited contextual awareness, often giving only unrelated generalisations about Shakespeare's Globe or Elizabethan attitudes.

#### **(b) Comprehensive responses**

- Had a confident and secure knowledge of the passage and its significance to the play, for example identifying the context of the extract and explaining that the storm was a consequence of Prospero's magical powers.
- Understood how traditional hierarchy was subverted and the effects of that in terms of the play's wider concerns, recognising that the clash was based around status and power.
- Identified the extract's dramatic impact as the opening scene, for example the possible audience shock at the power reversal as the courtiers' usual authority is challenged by the boatswain and the storm.
- Analysed Shakespeare's creation of tension by discussing such methods as rapid exchanges, fragmented dialogue, conflicting authority, sound effects and stage directions.
- Analysed the use of language, for example explaining how the language of Sebastian and Antonio characterises them as violent and disrespectful and the importance of that in the play's development.
- Demonstrated awareness that the extract is intended for performance, discussing vocal delivery, movement and audience expectation, with some sense that this is a play and so the sinking, shouting and praying at the end would have created suspense and tension for the audience.
- Considered Shakespeare's use of pace, interruptions, verse and prose, entrances and exits, and shifting power relationships to explain how the dramatic tension develops.

**Limited responses**

- Read the extract as prose rather than dramatic dialogue, overlooking theatrical effects, often interpreting the passage as a reader not as part of a play meant to be watched/performed.
- Placed too much emphasis on punctuation details, such as Shakespeare's use of exclamation marks and not enough on the actual words or delivery.
- Had limited awareness of Prospero's creation of the storm and subsequent events.
- Gave general descriptions of what happened in the scene with all the exits and entrances, but without considering their effects.
- Misunderstood significant details, for example seeing Gonzalo as a troublemaker and suggesting his comments around the Boatswain and hanging were threats rather than reassurances.
- Approached the passage as an unseen, dealing with it as a story about some people on a boat in a storm arguing.

**JOHN WEBSTER: The Duchess of Malfi**

**Question 4**

**(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Had a confident and secure knowledge of the play so that Antonio was recognised as an honourable and loyal character, often contrasting him with the corrupt court.
- Explored how Webster uses Antonio to set the moral standard for the play before we meet the Cardinal and Ferdinand so we can trust him as a moral observer.
- Contrasted Antonio's virtue with the brothers' vices, relating it to historical context and Jacobean tragedy and exploring how his moral judgements become his vulnerability within a corrupt world.
- Analysed his role as a paradigm of virtue in contrast to Bosola's ambiguity and drawing appropriate parallels between their intertwined narratives.
- Explored how Webster shapes audience sympathy through Antonio's relationship with the Duchess, emphasising his genuine love for her.
- Analysed the effects of Webster's dramatic methods, such as language, imagery, tone and stagecraft, using appropriate quotation and examples to support the arguments.
- Used context appropriately, for example to show how in the Jacobean society obsessed with bloodlines, Antonio and his foil, Bosola, represent the changing world order and social development.

**Limited responses**

- Showed straightforward knowledge of Antonio's character attributes with limited discussion of dramatic methods.
- Had some difficulty in supporting points with suitable examples or quotations.
- Had some difficulty in analysing Webster's dramatic methods.
- Showed limited contextual awareness, often giving only unsupported generalisations about Webster's plays and Jacobean attitudes.

**(b) Comprehensive responses**

- Explored Webster's use of dramatic irony, imagery, dialogue and character interaction to heighten audience engagement.
- Considered how the extract contributes to wider concerns of corruption, power and morality.
- Analysed language for example as a way to understand Julia's wit and ambiguity.
- Commented on the tension between Julia and the Cardinal and recognised the importance of the extract within the play.
- Analysed Webster's use of language, for example the falconry references to show how Webster chose language to suggest and emphasise psychological domination.
- Understood the significance of this extract to the audience's understanding of the Cardinal: from his hypocrisy as a holy man of the Church hunting down his sister for her 'lechery' contrasted with the passage where we see he has a mistress.
- Discussed the significance of the exchange with Delio at the end of the passage and the news brought by Julia's husband.

**Limited responses**

- Responded with narrative summaries and limited close analysis of the details of the passage, such as the significance of stagecraft.
- Had a limited knowledge and understanding of who's who in the extract and the relationships, for example Delio's significance and role, here and in the play generally.
- Summarised the dramatic narratives of the Cardinal and Julia in detail, often seeing them as real people rather than constructs, with only intermittent reference to the passage itself.
- Identified some of Webster's dramatic methods by name and example, without analysing their effects or significance.
- Had a generalised sense of the textual context, without placing the passage precisely within the structure of the dramatic plot.

**Section B Poetry**

**MAYA ANGELOU: And Still I Rise**

**Question 5**

**(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Chose appropriate poems, the selection of which allowed candidates to compare contrasting representations of family relationships across different contexts, balancing discussion across both poems while making meaningful comparisons.
- Explored both supportive and fractured family relationships without assuming family life was presented positively throughout and demonstrated a sound understanding of Angelou's presentation of family life, with many exploring themes of love, resilience and identity while recognising that family can also involve absence, conflict and sacrifice.
- Discussed some of Angelou's concerns appropriately and with sophistication, such as generational trauma, family metaphors, working-class reality, raising a family in poverty and the role of women.
- Demonstrated a good understanding and knowledge of Angelou's contextual background by referring, for example, to the Black Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and her contribution to the African American community. Other candidates discussed her abusive past and how it has likely influenced her poetry.
- Developed informed and persuasive arguments with supporting references to poems and appropriate quotation.
- Analysed some of Angelou's poetic methods with understanding of the effects of rhythm, rhyme, language and imagery.

**Limited responses**

- Had some limited personal response and relevant opinions, though often unsupported by quotations or examples from the text.
- Discussed a range of topics such as racism, slavery or women's oppression rather than family life, as required by the question.
- Selected poems they had prepared rather than ones most applicable to topic, which limited the development of relevant arguments.
- Relied on paraphrase or summary with limited attention to poetic methods and only occasional comparison between the chosen poems.
- Discussed contextual details, such as Angelou's background, without linking the points relevantly to the given task.

**(b) Comprehensive responses**

- Focused on the presentation of the singer as unable/unwilling to sing, linking this to constraint, frustration, and unrealised/unused gifts and talents, exploring the presentation of the singer as both an individual performer and a symbolic artistic voice.
- Analysed Angelou's poetic choices such as rhythm, repetition, imagery symbolism and language in detail, with perceptive discussion of the effects of her choices.
- Analysed imagery and sound in detail, for example how the religious imagery and religious lexis contribute to the tone of disappointment.
- Discussed the notion of struggle against different things – racism, domestic abuse, personal confidence, for example – to explain how Angelou presents resilience, dignity and emotional strength despite rejection.

- Showed informed understanding of relevant biographical and historical context, which was used to support and develop the interpretation.
- Linked imagery to different kinds of silence: emotional, creative and metaphorical for example and were aware of her use of physical features – throat, tongue and lips – to create emotion and effects, linking these ideas to her overarching concern of the inability to realise dreams.
- Selected relevant knowledge of the details of the poem to support arguments and had confident understanding of the poetic references.

#### Limited responses

- Focused on paraphrasing the poem rather than analysing poetic methods, for example translating unfamiliar words such as ‘benison’, sometimes correctly, but without comment on their poetic effects.
- Had some limited knowledge of Angelou’s work and background generally, but not the set poem, leading to writing a more unfocused essay on her concerns.
- Attempted links to slavery or contextual points from Angelou’s life without firm textual grounding or support, with some contextual details discussed that were not always relevant to the set poem.
- Discussed the poem as an unseen and offered an unsupported personal response, reading the poem literally, with little sense of the context, for example misinterpreting the title as the singer refusing to sing for someone named ‘Al’ rather than recognising it as the dedication.
- Misinterpreted some aspects of the poem, for example arguing, without textual support, that the poem shows that the singer is dead or that she has chosen not to sing due to her oppression as a Black woman.
- Identified and exemplified from the poem some poetic methods such as caesura and enjambement, without analysing their effects or integrating the references into the argument.

### From WILLIAM BLAKE: Songs of Innocence and Experience

#### Question 6

##### (a) Comprehensive responses

- Selected appropriate poems to explore Blake’s contrasting treatment of institutional religion and genuine spiritual faith.
- Recognised and understood Blake’s use of paired poems to expose conflicting and contrasting perspectives.
- Analysed closely symbolism, biblical imagery and voice, with apt supporting examples and quotations.
- Explored the complexities of Blake’s presentation of organised religion, spiritual innocence and moral corruption while supporting arguments with close analysis of poetic methods, such as language, verse form, rhyme and rhythm.
- Integrated appropriate, brief contextual points into their well-structured interpretations.

##### Limited responses

- Treated Blake as simply promoting Christianity without recognising his criticism of organised religion.
- Relied on general contextual knowledge, with limited relevant textual support.
- Discussed poetic content with limited analysis of poetic methods and their effects.
- Did not have an appropriate balance between chosen poems or used inappropriate poems, such as the set poem from **(b)** question.
- Discussed other of Blake’s concerns such as child labour and industrialisation with restricted focus on the terms of the question.
- Summarised the poems as narratives with limited awareness of the poetic genre.

##### (b) Comprehensive responses

- Commented on the verse form and the effect of repetition, such as the parallel structures in the first stanza and the ways in which they draw attention to the difference in attitude, choices and consequences (friend vs foe, told vs told it not; did end vs did grow).
- Identified and analysed Blake’s specific techniques such as anaphora and the use of first person, as well as the extended metaphor of cultivation and growth to explain the development of anger.

- Understood the relationship dynamics and analysed how structure and language shaped the reader's response to its development. Structure was well commented on by some candidates. For example, 'the structure of four quatrains with an AABB rhyme scheme created a singsong feel at odds with the darkness of the message within the poem'.
- Developed symbolic readings of the garden via the Garden of Eden (serpent, temptation), linking to revenge and punishment, while integrating context effectively, such as Blake's religious beliefs.
- Interpreted the apple in a number of interesting ways, such as snow white and the poison apple, the apple of discord and Czech mythology, as well as the biblical reference to Eve and the serpent.
- Explored how in the corrupted mind of the speaker, the foe becomes a despised trespasser (*stole*) and how Blake presents the chilling sadistic triumph and moral degradation of the speaker who has no remorse or horror, just malicious victory (*glad*) at the death of his foe, making the simple rhyme chillingly playful.

#### Limited responses

- Focused only on the ending, overlooking the gradual development of the relationship and tended to misunderstand how Blake presents the speaker's anger being kept alive and nourished with negative emotions.
- Discussed only the biblical reference to the apple, offering a limited interpretation based on lessons from Genesis – forbidden fruit – rather than answering the question.
- Had only a limited knowledge of poetic methods and literary features, with which to support their personal response.
- Discussed the poem line-by-line, without offering an overview of the poem, leading to limited development of an appropriate argument.
- Had some misunderstanding of the meaning of the poem, such as seeing the 'garden' literally and ignoring its implications, assuming the friend and foe were the same person and seeing the tree as an actual tree.
- Had some difficulty distinguishing between the responses to friend and foe or the symbolism of the apple.

From SYLVIA PLATH: *Ariel*

#### Question 7

##### (a) Comprehensive responses

- Knew and appreciated Plath's poems and developed a strong personal response to the given task, supported by well-chosen and appropriate poems. Candidates who directly compared poems tended to be most successful.
- Integrated appropriate contextual points, without losing focus on the specific poems and the given task.
- Explored Plath's different attitudes to Death, such as how she presents it as both terrifying and transformative. Some responses argued that she presented death as being connected to suffering and more of a psychological phenomenon rather than a physical one.
- Analysed Plath's poetic methods, such as language, imagery and verse form in detail, with perceptive awareness of the effects of her choices.
- Commented closely on Plath's use of symbolism (for example 'poppies') and linked their comments into an informed personal interpretation.

##### Limited responses

- Relied excessively on Plath's biography at the expense of textual analysis.
- Assumed every poem directly reflected the poet's personal experiences, with a consequent limited awareness of Plath's poetic constructs.
- Summarised and paraphrased their chosen poems with only limited commentary and analysis relevant to the question.
- Made general contextual points with insufficient connection to the specifics of the task or the poems chosen for discussion.

**(b) Comprehensive responses**

- Explored the speaker's conflicting and complex emotions towards motherhood, recognising both tenderness and uncertainty and explored the poetic tensions, for example between ideals of motherhood and lived reality.
- Interpreted the poem with secure knowledge and understanding of its meaning and effects, with a confident grasp of details such as references to the gold watch and the museum.
- Analysed Plath's poetic choices, such as imagery, sound patterns and shifting tone to explain the developing relationship between mother and child, with confident understanding of the effects of her choices.
- Closely analysed the structure of the poem and its emotional complexity, such as the contrast and conflict between emotional distance and growing attachment.
- Tracked imagery sensitively noting nuances of both positive and less positive shading, such as the effects of 'flat pink roses,' 'Victorian nightgown,' and 'cow-heavy and floral'.
- Integrated appropriate brief contextual points into an effectively structured argument, focused on the details of the set poem.

**Limited responses**

- Assumed the poem presented only maternal happiness. These answers were often assertive, and either unsupported or appended quotations which suggested the opposite meaning.
- Focused on paraphrase and summary of the poem, with only limited analysis of Plath's poetic methods and their effects and insecure knowledge and understanding of key images and references such as the 'fat gold watch' and the museum.
- Discussed contextual, biographical points at length with a consequent loss of focus on the set poem.

from **Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2**

**Question 8**

**(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Selected poems offering contrasting experiences of personal, emotional or environmental changes, which could be psychological, biological or geographical.
- Discussed the meaning of their selected poems, with knowledge and understanding, aware of possible nuances and appropriate contexts.
- Structured essays effectively with, for example, sustained comparisons of the two poems throughout rather than discussing each poem separately.
- Developed and explored interpretations of the effects of change such as how it may produce both loss and renewal or misery and delight.
- Considered and contrasted in detail the different poetic methods chosen by the poets, particularly language, imagery and poetic structure, with sustained focus on their effects.
- Integrated appropriate contextual points into their well-structured arguments.

**Limited responses**

- Relied on paraphrase rather than literary analysis and misremembered some of the details of the poems and offered little or no contextual support.
- Chose inappropriate poems for the given task and wrote unbalanced essays, which were sequential discussions of individual poems, with limited comparison and in some cases where one of the chosen poems was discussed only briefly.
- Limited responses were focused on describing changes without analysing their poetic effects or the poets' specific choices.
- Were aware of specific techniques (most commonly enjambment, rhyme and caesura) and exemplified them, but without considering why the poet may have chosen them or analysing their effects.

**(b) Comprehensive responses**

- Discussed the poem with secure knowledge and confident understanding of its meaning and Collins's concerns, supported by close reference to the poem and appropriate contexts, commenting for example on the contrast between the speaker's human assumptions and the mysterious self-possession of the cows.

- Understood the speaker's philosophical engagement with the cows, including their 'universal' quality and relationship with time, recognising the speaker's mixture of curiosity, admiration and self-reflection.
- Analysed the gradual shift from observation towards broader reflection, by exploring Collins' conversational tone, humour and vivid imagery, showing how these shape the reader's response.
- Analysed in detail Collins's use of imagery, poetic structure, first-person voice, sensory detail and the physical/geographical grounding of the cows and commenting, for example, on the humorous exaggeration and the shift towards respect for the animals' dignity and presence.
- Explored the effects of Collins's language choices, for example those suggestive of violence and suffering that the speaker uses to describe the sounds of the cow and understood that this is metaphorical language.
- Integrated effective references to context and apposite quotations from the poem into a well-structured essay, focused on the given task.

#### **Limited responses**

- Had insecure knowledge of the meaning of the poem, leading to a misunderstanding of the situation and narrative interpretations unsupported by the text. For example some candidates suggested the cows were being slaughtered or the poem described a cow giving birth.
- Identified some poetic methods such as enjambement and caesura without analysing them in terms of a contribution to the poem's overall effect. Some candidates misread the tone of the poem and described events in a 'cartoon'/slapstick way for example believing the speaker was being chased by the cows or was terrified of their disappearance.
- Explained the meaning of the poem in simple terms, focused on the surface narrative without considering how the poet develops ideas across the poem's length.
- Had limited appreciation of Collins's poetic choices, treating the poem as a narrative rather than a poetic construction.
- Asserted that the speaker is shocked or curious without identifying specific ways in which the poet shows the speaker's reactions.

### **Section C Prose**

#### **KIRAN DESAI: The Inheritance of Loss**

#### **Question 9**

##### **(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Responded to the question with sound knowledge of the text and secure understanding of Desai's concerns, using appropriate textual and contextual references to support their arguments.
- Discussed Lola and Noni as presented to be both comic and symbolic characters, initially inviting 'gentle ridicule', but revealed to be ill-equipped to navigate postcolonial change. Some candidates saw their importance, for example, as 'how they embody the contradictions of postcolonial identity and expose the fragility of inherited privilege.'
- Explored how they were representatives of a class shaped by colonial education and values, creating a sense of displacement and not belonging in either culture.
- Considered Desai's presentation by analysing some of the literary features such as narrative voice, structure and language, supporting points with appropriate brief quotations and examples.

##### **Limited responses**

- Tended to summarise parts of the novel in which Lola and Noni appeared, with limited direct reference to the details of the text and uneven focus on the given task.
- Were insecure in textual and contextual knowledge and understanding, confusing Lola and Noni with other characters in the novel.
- Had limited ability to discuss Desai's literary choices and tended to see Lola and Noni as 'real people' rather than literary constructs in a novel.

- (b) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.

from **Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1**

#### Question 10

- (a) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.

(b) **Comprehensive responses**

- Discussed the passage with secure knowledge of the complete story and confident understanding of its significance in the wider text.
- Developed interpretations recognising how the characters are avoiding the reason for being there and well-focused on for example the effects of Mistry's use of banalities and repetitions about the drinks and refreshments.
- Analysed some of Mistry's methods and literary choices in detail, such as the use of imagery and symbols, such as the coke bottle and the towels being hung on the balcony.
- Had an appropriate grasp of relevant contexts and were able to integrate references to the wider text into a structured interpretation.

**Limited responses**

- Produced narrative-based responses, giving a commentary on the passage rather than addressing the question directly, often with little or no reference to the textual context or the rest of the story.
- Discussed in a limited way Mistry's literary choices and how she presents the interactions between the characters or moves between narrative, dialogue and indirect speech.

#### EVELYN WAUGH: A Handful of Dust

#### Question 11

(a) **Comprehensive responses**

- Selected relevant material from the text on which to base their response, showing sound knowledge and understanding of relevant textual and contextual details.
- Explored Waugh's methods of characterisation such as language, contrast, narrative voice and tone, supporting points relevantly with apposite quotation and examples from the text.
- Developed a valid personal response to the task, informed by careful selections and appropriate literary commentary.
- Understood the concept of 'role' within a novel and explored Grant-Menzies's specific role in the novel in terms of Waugh's themes and concerns, with awareness of how he contrasted other characters such as Tony and his significance in Waugh's portrayal of key relationships.

**Limited responses**

- Tended to retell relevant parts of the narrative, with limited supporting commentary on or awareness of the character's role.
- Offered personal opinions relevant to the task, without appropriate supporting references to the text, some details of which were misunderstood or confused.
- Made general comments on Waugh's methods, showing a basic grasp of novelistic technique and limited awareness for example of Waugh's use of humour and contrast.
- Discussed contexts in a general way, without linking points to the specifics of the text and the task.

(b) **Comprehensive responses**

- Had secure knowledge and understanding of the context for the given passage and discussed its significance to the wider text, such as Beaver's later relationship with Brenda.
- Contrasted Tony's sincere, good-heartedness with Beaver's cynicism and explored how Waugh foreshadows Brenda and Beaver's relationship by her hatred of the house.
- Analysed Waugh's literary methods in detail, commenting closely on language, dialogue, narrative structures and tone, with for example appropriate discussions of Waugh's use of free indirect discourse and how Brenda's rejection of Tony's house is symbolic.
- Integrated appropriate textual references and contextual points into a structured and focused response to the task.

**Limited responses**

- Explained or paraphrased the extract with limited awareness of the textual context or the significance of the extract to the text as a whole.
- Discussed what happened to Tony and Beaver in the rest of the novel, with intermittent reference to the given passage.
- Commented in general terms on some aspects of Waugh's presentation, with limited understanding of his style or the genre.
- Discussed context in general or not at all, with only limited reference to the passage and the wider novel.

**COLSON WHITEHEAD: The Underground Railroad**

**Question 12**

**(a) Comprehensive responses**

- Discussed relevant ideas, in a personal response, which was well informed, bringing in contextual factors, including looking at the different laws on slavery in different states, often responding to the task and the text with engagement.
- Analysed Whitehead's methods of characterisation particularly of the central figures in the novel such as Cora, Royal and Mabel, with understanding of how Whitehead creates complexity and disturbing reactions in his readers, for example by his presentation of Ridgeway's relationship with Homer.
- Explored some of Whitehead's literary methods such as language, contrast and tone, with appropriate understanding of the genre.
- Developed a structured and supported response, relevant to the task, informed by appropriate contextual points and apposite quotation.

**Limited responses**

- Discussed slavery in general terms, with only limited reference to the details of the task.
- Made general comments about significant contextual points without linking them to a developed argument relevant to the task.
- Had limited knowledge of the details of the text, sometimes misremembering characters and their actions and misunderstanding their significance.
- Explored Whitehead's methods generally with a limited grasp of the genre and its typical features.

**(b) Comprehensive responses**

- Had a secure knowledge of the meaning and significance of the passage in the context of the wider novel.
- Commented closely on Whitehead's methods, for example looking at the imagery and how it was symbolic of the false promise of Valentine Farm.
- Compared the Indiana station with the other stations in other states, exploring how the different states represented different attitudes to slavery through the stations.
- Understood the literary features of a novel and explored for example language, tone, dialogue and narrative description within the passage and considered some of the effects of Whitehead's choices on the reader.
- Supported arguments with appropriate quotations and relevant contextual points, integrated into a structured and organised response.

**Limited responses**

- Had limited knowledge of the context for the passage, though often relevantly discussing the characters of Royal and Cora, sometimes ignoring the Indiana station itself.
- Tended to retell the narrative of Royal and Cora's relationship, with only occasional reference to the passage.
- Had a limited understanding of the genre and commented on Whitehead's methods in general terms, with partial support from the passage.
- Discussed in too much detail the wider context of slavery within the novel and in historical terms, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage and the question.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/22

Drama, Poetry and Prose Paper

## Key messages

### What candidates did well

- Candidates who performed particularly well in the **(a)** questions clearly had at least a sound knowledge of events, themes and characters and their relationships to each other (Albee, John and Shakespeare).
- In the **(b)** questions, many candidates covered the whole of the passage, selecting key points rather than giving equal weight to every line, resulting in a clearer, more competently analytical approach.
- The majority of candidates showed evidence of appropriate preparation in selecting relevant material with which to address the given tasks and often had at least a straightforward knowledge of their two texts.
- Some candidates confidently drew interesting, sometimes perceptive, contrasts between characters, particularly in the Albee and John responses.
- Many candidates integrated references to language, rhythm and imagery into an overall interpretation, leading to more relevant points and a more structured approach.

### What candidates needed to improve

- When discussing dramatic texts, candidates could have shown more understanding of the effects of dramatic devices behind ideas of 'presentation', remembering that an audience would be present during a performance and dramatic devices are designed to produce particular dramatic effects, often communicated through careful stage directions.
- The ability to analyse a text could be further developed, to improve confidence when applying and discussing a wide range of literary methods and their effects, for example a clearer understanding of dramatic irony.
- Creating a more balanced response to **Section A** questions: giving detailed attention to both poems instead of reducing the second to a brief, concluding paragraph, as seen in Songs and Angelou would improve the structural approach.
- Some candidates need to focus more on the detail of the given passages in option **(b)** questions, instead of using an overly summative approach which leads to narrating and explaining rather than analysing.
- Incorporating a more secure contextual knowledge into relevant sections of essays would help some candidates develop a clearer basis for argument and analysis. A little more understanding of the characters' circumstances at particular points in the text would help in developing fuller responses in drama essays, for example.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section A Drama

#### Question 1

#### EDWARD ALBEE: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf

##### **(a) Comprehensive Responses**

- Pointed to Albee's dialogue and stage direction to show that families can be 'significant', or they can fail. Many responses saw the play as a comment on American society and the pressures it places on individuals and their families.

- Saw Albee's presentation of family not as a haven of comfort, but as the ultimate psychological battleground.
- Cited Albee's presentation of family as the basic building block of American society: one which the dramatist was intent on demolishing. Some defined family broadly, such as the married couples of the play, or their extended family, or as work families within the university dynamic, and explored how these groupings shaped personal lives.
- Made links to absurdism and existentialism, seeing the family institution as a mere construct, devoid of meaning, as hollow and hypocritical. Some saw the family as a site for illusion, conflict and emotional survival.
- Explored family as a social ladder to be climbed, such as marrying into wealth, as George and Nick do, where, as one candidate notes: 'marriage is manipulated to be the result of cold calculation'.
- Developed appropriate contrasts, such as Martha and George's destruction of their illusion in their imaginary son versus Honey and Nick's terror and impotence as a family. Other candidates argued that the young couple are the reverse of the older, outwardly chaotic couple because they are chaotic on the inside. Candidates explored how children (real or imagined or in utero) structure family dynamics and saw Albee's engineering of the imaginary son as a dynamic to enable an artificial family.
- Showed awareness of the contexts of gender and the patriarchal system, sometimes seeing the role off-stage fathers played in continuing to dominate the social order.

#### Limited Responses

- Were less able to provide textual quotation to support their ideas and treated the couples separately, without wider conceptual exploration of meanings.
- Reduced the question to simple discussions of the American Dream and offered reductive gender stereotypes of the period, unaware that the 1960's was the advent of mass birth control and the sexual revolution.
- Discussed the characters as if they were self-motivating, rather than Albee's constructions, used to show how the family unit of his time was changing. Often responses were plot-driven, with limited reference to dramatic detail of stage action.

#### (b) Comprehensive Responses

- Offered good focus on George, on the extract and often with knowledge and quotation from the wider text.
- Saw George as 'the director of metatheatrical games, in the scene showing how smoothly he can reassert his dominance and the moral high ground that he gave up to Martha in Act 1'. Many responses saw George as a father figure in the scene, citing the tensions and possible similarities between the men.
- Developed discussions of George and Nick into explorations of masculinity and power. Some candidates saw George as attempting to helpfully instruct Nick, others saw his 'façade of helpfulness' or that he was living in the illusion of his superiority. Others saw that Nick's 'performative perfectness' begins to come apart here.
- Presented various interpretations, for instance that Albee sets the men up in opposition and gives an audience the difficult task of not sympathising with either: George as the perverted mentor figure, subverting the trope of the wise, older academic guiding the newcomer, Nick as the hard-headed scientist, devoid of empathy.
- Explored Albee's use of language incisively, seeing George as agitator and controller of the conversation and the impact of stage directions to add dramatic action to the scene and also the effectiveness of ellipsis and dramatic pause, used here to shape the experience of the watching audience.
- Analysed George's final monologue as representing existential dread, like *Waiting for Godot*, or prophetic, foreshadowing the fall of the New Carthage.
- Noted the comic elements of the scene alongside its tensions and underlying threat, citing George's intelligence and sarcasm in 'Albee's use of an emotionally complex and changing tone'.
- Integrated social context into responses, such as the competitive and inefficient American environment of the period, with its gender bias and limited expectations for women.

#### Limited Responses

- Did not cover the whole extract, often missing George's final monologue, which gives the scene its focal point.

- Reduced discussion to an argument of which character they preferred and believed, rather than seeing them as devices of Albee's making, or saw Nick as the weaker man, George as dominant here.
- Were not always able to contextualise the extract, to show what the audience know at this point in the play, and what their expectations are, as they watch this scene, for the ways in which the plot could resolve.

## Question 2

### ERROL JOHN: *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*

#### (a) Comprehensive Responses

- Focused on the dramatist's use of stagecraft, dialogue and stage directions to demonstrate the desires of his characters.
- Developed responses that were character-driven and focused on Epf and the way he battled to control desire over responsibility. Some answers saw his desire to help Esther as driving the plot of the play and as his redeeming feature.
- Discussed the desires of Sophia (to protect her family) and considered the contrasting desires of Epf, Sophia, Esther, Charlie and Mavis, reflecting on how their ambitions affected relationships and created dramatic tension in the play.
- Integrated references to the social context of the lived experience of the characters as the reason their desires would not be met. The yard play form was noted and analysed, and candidates saw the environment as the main factor for destroying all hopes and desires.

#### Limited Responses

- Offered an open discussion of what the characters wanted and how they did or did not achieve their desires, for example how Epf had to leave to achieve his. There was limited quotation or specific detail from the text to support the opinions offered.
- Condemned characters for their choices without seeing them as dramatic constructs or considering the dramatist's purposes for the characters.

#### (b) Comprehensive Responses

- Offered interesting discussions of the extract's tensions and focused on Epf's situation as a fallen hero, here preparing to abandon Trinidad and Rosa.
- Analysed the dramatic tensions created through stage directions, dialogue and Sophia's emotional state following Charlie's arrest.
- Developed responses focused on 'tension', the stage directions detailing weather and the *mise-en-scene*. They also paid attention to the stage directions on Sophia's costume and how John uses this to reflect her internal state.
- Offered sympathetic analysis of Sophia, carrying the burden of family matriarch with her husband imprisoned and her daughter missing. With some candidates seeing the scene as exemplifying 'the remorseful trajectory of Sophia's life'. Some responses also contrasted Epf's hope for a new future with Sophia's anxiety for her family, noting how John in this scene juxtaposes hope and despair.
- Had knowledge of recurring motifs, such as time, water, moon, music, with secure analysis of the effects of John's choices: water, usually seen as a relief and hope, signifies the opposite here; moon, usually signifying light is here entrapment; time, in 'checks his watch' and the chiming clock, is running out for the women; music, reflected in Epf's choice of American tracks, is taking him away from his culture.
- Analysed John's juxtaposition of character tension, exemplified by Mavis and Epf: whereas Mavis and Prince take monumental steps towards their respective dreams, Epf has to give up something to get something, his ambition coming at a great cost.
- Focused on the contrasts between the dynamic presentations of Mavis and Sophia, with interesting interpretations developed around women's roles, feminism, freedom and duty.
- Analysed the scene's structure, with the opening showing Mavis's success and the close showing Sophia's failure and John's complex staging of the scene comprising different visual events to hold the audience's attention, setting the characters, and their outcomes, up for comparison.

#### Limited Responses

- Reduced 'tension' to those felt by the characters, not the audience.

- Either focused in some detail on character analysis of Mavis and Prince, without seeing the staging of the extract or Epf's presence on the stage or Sophia's entrance, or ignored the first page, only focusing on Epf and Sophia.
- Needed to explore in fuller detail the motifs of the scene – the 'rain has stopped' the clock chiming, 'her shoes are damp' – all features designed by the dramatist to create tension, evoke sympathy and prepare an audience for the outcome of the play.

### Question 3

#### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

##### (a) Comprehensive Responses

- Discussed the concerns the dramatist had for the presentation of this female character. They therefore saw Miranda evolving through her encounters with her father, her lover and her tormentor, Caliban, as well as her status as the only woman on the stage.
- Analysed Shakespeare's characterisation of Miranda discussing her innocence, compassion and developing independence. Her relationships are significant to the play: with Prospero, she is the dutiful daughter transitioning into an autonomous adult; with Caliban, she is a fierce defender of virtue and civilization; with Ferdinand, she is a candid, egalitarian partner in love and, when she meets Mankind, she is the optimistic symbol of a new generation, ready to heal the fractures of the past.
- Identified Miranda as a vehicle through which Shakespeare explored the role and plight of women in his society, seeing her faults as socially enforced and her achievements as a signal that change, for women, was possible.
- Recognised her brief moments of defiance earlier in the play, despite being subservient to men through love or duty: she has empathy and care, she occasionally defies her father, she is at times a pawn.
- Referred to gender context, alongside some historical context of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, where women's roles were confined.
- Supported discussion points with textual references, such as Prospero's 'the fringed curtains of thine eye' offering allusion to both stage curtains and a puppet show for Miranda as a controlled character. Some responses questioned the reliability of Miranda's love at first sight, given her lack of exposure to wider experience.

##### Limited Responses

- Offered discussion of character without textual quotation or accurate knowledge of textual action or detail.
- Focused on narrative of character and her relationships, without considering 'different relationships' or the methods through which Shakespeare 'presents' these to an audience.
- Reduced her character to a gender stereotype, offering reductive generalisations of how badly women were treated in years gone by, without solid contextual understanding or knowledge, such as Queen Elizabeth I's lengthy rule and authority or Shakespeare's penchant for strong female characterisation.

##### (b) Comprehensive Responses

- Situated the extract in the wider text, detailing what the audience know so far of the plot and the inherent dramatic ironies of the scene, such as Prospero's 'not so much perdition as an hair/Betide to any creature' reminding the audience of Ferdinand's survival and Prospero's wider project of punishing those who had banished him.
- Divided the 'companions' as either treacherous or compassionate, drawing on later textual knowledge of sub-plots and attempts to kill the king and citing the elevated register of Francisco and Gonzalo in juxtaposition to Sebastian and Antonio's crude and disrespectful language.
- Identified contrasting characterisations, such as whilst Antonio and Sebastian show flippant disregard for Alonso's grief, Gonzalo and Francisco are positive in their outlook, with some confident analysis of Shakespeare's presentation of Alonso, not as a king, but as a parent, presented to the audience as a distraught father, mourning the literal and metaphoric loss of his children.
- Focused on language and saw Francisco's speech as 'like an eyewitness account' with its rich recreation of the shipwreck and the presentation of Gonzalo's ability to observe carefully and think critically, for instance his optimistic simile 'our garments now seem as fresh...' which opens the scene.

- Had secure understanding of the characters' context, seeing their return from the wedding presaging the supposed funeral of Ferdinand and the mock punishment of the King as reflecting other treacheries found in the play.

#### Limited Responses

- Offered a surface reading of the scene's action and some engagement with characters' language without wider explanation of who they are and how they have a role in the wider action of the play.
- Demonstrated some knowledge of the shipwreck's impact and some interrogation of the comic aspects of language, without integrating this into discussion of the more serious tone of the extract or Shakespeare's concerns in the wider play.

### Question 4

#### JOHN WEBSTER: The Duchess of Malfi

##### (a) Comprehensive Responses

- Focused on the conflict between characters, with further subdivisions of inner conflict and personal conflict - particularly in reference to Bosola - also explored.
- Detailed different kinds of conflict, such as political, familial, psychological and moral and considered how these conflicts contribute to the tragic development of the play.
- Supported ideas with appropriate contextual material such as Webster presenting his own era and that of the play as rich in conflict, of both humanity and the corruption of society. For instance, the class conflict seen in the Duchess's marriage was shown as subverting the rigid Jacobean social hierarchy, or the moral inner conflict of Bosola, presented by the dramatist through his frequent soliloquies.
- Developed a range of interpretations that identified the familial conflict of Malfi's rulers as central to the outcome of the play with Webster's juxtaposition of Antonio's genuine merit against the inherited, corrupt power of the Arragonian brothers an important contrast. Responding to the 'different kinds of conflict' of the question offered candidates greater scope for exploring the corruption versus integrity conflict which is at the heart of the drama.
- Cited the drama's historical context as written in the aftermath of the English Reformation, a time of political instability and moral ambiguity, reflected in the play's characters and action.
- Analysed Webster's language in detail, with appropriate quotation to support comments on the effects of words, imagery and verse form.

##### Limited Responses

- Discussed family conflict only, simplified to the brothers' weaknesses and the Duchess's pride.
- Had limited ability to provide textual detail to support a line of argument.
- Had limited appreciation of the text as a play, concentrating on the plot of the play as a narrative structure without an audience.

##### (b) Comprehensive Responses

- Began by contextualising what the audience already knows of character and plot as the scene opens, which led to fruitful discussions of the Duchess's peril and Bosola's conscience at this stage in the play.
- Noted the way Webster allows Ferdinand to disclose his true character in the scene – not to his sister, but to Bosola, recognising that their relationship is unequal and dangerous; a power structure where the superior was the commander, the inferior the spy.
- Focused on the imbalance of dialogue in the scene to represent Ferdinand and Bosola's social difference and how the end of the passage - when Bosola indicates his ability to contend against Ferdinand, which some answers saw as foreshadowing later events. Candidates also saw Bosola's questioning of Ferdinand's intentions as early evidence of his ethical concerns.
- Explored language appropriately: for example the series of rhetorical questions which Webster uses to mark the difference in their authority. Some responses explored the nuances of meaning implied in Webster's choices to good effect.
- Recognised the imbalance in the relationship, though some found the interesting detail of Bosola's questioning as foreshadowing their final conflict.
- Offered contextual readings that explored how the class system forces people into corruption and sin.

### Limited Responses

- Responded to the question's character focus by summarising what the audience knows about Ferdinand and Bosola, often without seeing the role of the Duchess and her significance at the start of the scene.
- Had a limited sense of the textual context of the passage, with some misreadings of what the audience and the characters on the stage know at this point in the play.
- Demonstrated a limited understanding of dramatic methods and the effects of some of Webster's dramatic choices in the passage, such as the various exits and entrances.

## Section B Poetry

### Question 5

#### MAYA ANGELOU: And Still I Rise

##### (a) Comprehensive Responses

- Demonstrated secure knowledge of the text by selecting apt poems where nature plays a distinct symbolic or structural role, such as *Still I Rise/California Prodigal/My Arkansas/Woman Work* and showed the points where the poems' features contrasted or met to reflect the poet's concerns.
- Explored how Angelou uses the natural world as an allegorical framework for freedom, resilience or relief from exhausting domesticity whilst also sustaining a comparison of the selected poems and integrating contextual discussion usefully into the analysis.
- Acknowledged the poet's social and geographical contexts in terms of her lived experience in rural America, with sensitive awareness of the way this experienced was reflected in and added to the effects of her poetry.
- Analysed some aspects of Angelou's poetic methods, such as how she used natural elements sun/rain/wind as symbols and to explore the subversion patterns of human oppression. Other comprehensive responses developed confident appreciation of her use of verse form, structure, voice and settings and often explored the effects of her choices.

##### Limited Responses

- Listed instances of Angelou referring to weather or animals without developing an overarching argument in response to the question.
- Had some difficulty maintaining a balance between the two poems, treating them separately and not drawing links between the meanings produced by them.
- Selected poems where references to nature were incidental, leading to descriptive rather than analytical discussion.
- Had some difficulty connecting the poet's context to their chosen poems' themes.
- Recognised some of her poetic features such as language and imagery as important without considering their effects on the reader.

##### (b) Analyse Angelou's presentation of attitudes to work in the following poem.

##### Comprehensive Responses

- Comprehensive answers quickly established an overview of the poem's content: that this was a work song linking the suffering of oppressed people with their need to register their poetic protest as an expression of communal solidarity.
- Recognised the poet's insistence of dignity in work against the dehumanisation of slavery and servitude. Candidates saw the poem as a rejection of exploitation, as one response notes, it is like 'a slave-hymn, living through daily terror with incomparable resistance'.
- Established that Angelou is writing, post-slavery, of universal, generational suffering. Candidates were often engaged and personally invested in their response to the poem and its meanings, such as 'she transforms personal and historical experiences of oppression into a powerful expression of identity, resilience and self-affirmation.'
- Evaluated the structural shifts between personal declarations 'I was born to work' and ancestral legacy 'Papa drove steel' to show communal defiance against dehumanisation and a celebration of collective working, and linked this to Angelou's familial and generational framing of papa/mama, brothers/sisters.
- The structure of the poem was often seen as mimicking attitudes to work: it is repetitive, familiar in its uniformity and monotony and with steady and energetic rhythm in its lines.

- Analysed some of her poetic methods such as the voice, often identified as distinctly southern in accent, with its double negatives 'ain't no' and colloquialisms readily used to make its declarations. Other responses discussed enjambments which allow the speaker's voice to be uninterrupted, contrasted to the historical context where black voices have been silenced and oppressed.
- Discussed confidently the chant-like, syncopated refrain of the poem/work-song, analysing repetition and the choral effects of 'one more round/let's heave it down' to convey physical, repetitive labour, and the circularity of the poem which ends where it began, to symbolise the universal relationship one has with life's labour, often identifying the refrain as the collective voice.
- Offered multiple interpretations, such as a Marxist reading, exploring class oppression, supported by the points where Angelou distinguishes between fulfilling labour and capitalist exploitation – 'work itself is not the enemy, exploitation is'.

#### Limited Responses

- Offered a literal paraphrasing of the poem rather than a literary analysis of it, sometimes interpreting the voice or the persona only as a slave worker, with a consequent loss of understanding of parts of the poem.
- Discussed the poem's meaning in a straightforward way, though some candidates confused 'work' with 'slavery', ignoring how Angelou explicitly separates the pride of a 'job well done' from the subjugation of being a 'slave' or 'mule'.
- Listed various poetic devices such as caesura, repetition and enjambement without exploring their effects or linking these choices to the overall meaning of the poem.
- Made reference to general contextual points linking to Angelou's background or slavery, without integrating the references into their interpretations.

### Question 6

#### WILLIAM BLAKE: Selected Poems from, Songs of Innocence and Experience

##### (a) Comprehensive Responses

- Demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding by selecting the two poems carefully, for instance, exploration of child labour in *The Chimney Sweeper*, poverty and charity in *Holy Thursday* or a criticism of the powerful and greedy in *London*.
- Defined and understood the idea of 'social injustice' and linked elements of this to language and verse form, with apt discussion of the geographical setting of the poems such as 'chartered Thames', as an emblem of systemic injustice.
- Used the poems to explore Blake's criticism of institutional religion and poverty alongside social inequality, while integrating points about Blake's multi-layered use of irony and the subversion of institutional power (Church/Monarchy/State), contrasting the genuine spiritual purity of children with the corrupt social systems constructed by adults.
- Analysed some of Blake's poetic methods, such as language and imagery, verse form and structure and poetic voice, with appropriate supporting references to and quotations from the poems and in some cases a perceptive appreciation of the effects of these choices.
- Offered other interpretations and perspectives on the poems, such as Marxist and New Historicist approaches, to discuss the ways Blake exposes systems of political and religious power which perpetuated inequality during the Industrial Revolution. Other contextual focuses were the Dissenter's Movement, or the Romantics, both showing the social resistance to injustice inherent in Blake's day.

##### Limited Responses

- Chose two poems with which they were familiar rather than poems appropriate to the task, limiting the relevance of the interpretations offered to the given task.
- Offered generalised historical overviews on the Industrial Revolution or child labour without linking this to the poems and textual analysis.
- Asserted ideas such as that 'the children were sad' rather than evaluating the poetic methods used by Blake to generate pathos.
- Relied on knowledge of the meaning and events of the poems rather than analysing his poetic methods in detail.
- Had a general awareness of Blake's concerns and some historical contexts, which was not fully integrated into the essays nor used to develop the arguments presented.

**(b) Comprehensive Responses**

- Demonstrated knowledge and understanding by explaining the situation within the poem and offered a critique of Blake's concern with the dogmatic institutions of his era, analysing how they corrupt and destroy innocence and love.
- Analysed the boy's rational, natural theology of the opening stanzas, noting how his innocent logic exposes the artificial nature of religious dogma, developed in some essays into exploring Blake's use of voice in the poem, where the child's persona of the opening stanzas speaks, to challenge a key Christian commandment.
- Explored how Blake criticises organised religion by means of irony and symbolism, recognising the dramatic contrast between innocent questioning and institutional authority.
- Recognised the poetic voices and the virtual audience within the poem, the adults who witness the situation and 'all admir'd' it'. Other responses analysed the rigid quatrains as just as tight as authority was, or the justified repetition of 'weeping' to show how the boy is shackled and scarred.
- Analysed Blake's poetic methods, such as language and imagery, verse form and structure and poetic voice with perception, such as how the language and verse form demonstrated the innocence of the child contrasted to the cruel zeal of the priest, often interpreted as representing the suppression of reason as a threat to authoritarian power.
- Noted such significant details as the stark tonal shift of the third stanza as the priest's 'trembling zeal' turns violent, to recognise the tragic irony of the phrase 'priestly care' or the horrific imagery of the child bound in an 'iron chain' and burned in a 'holy place' standing as a critique of religious tyranny.
- Integrated apt contextual references into their interpretations, which were also supported by appropriate and telling use of quotation.

**Limited Responses**

- Offered readings of the poem which were at times superficial and literal, showing limited engagement with imagery, symbolism and motif.
- Approached the poem as an unseen, with limited knowledge and understanding of its meaning or of Blake's concerns, often paraphrasing or explaining the events in the poem, without fully appreciating the tone or the context.
- Had limited awareness of Blake's poetic methods, though some responses did identify specific poetic features such as enjambement, rhyme and repetition without exploring their effects or considering why Blake had made these poetic choices.

**Question 7**

**Sylvia Plath: Selected poems from ARIEL**

**(a) Comprehensive Responses**

- Demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the text to select appropriate poems such as *Tulips/Lady Lazarus/The Applicant/Sheep in Fog/The Munich Mannequins*.
- Engaged with the task by offering creative interpretations, moving from physical landscapes to explore domestic, psychological and institutional settings which were at times seen as psychological landscapes rather than physical locations.
- Argued that the poet presents sterile, bleak, often empty settings, where a melancholic state of the 'foggy afterlife' is explored. Other successful arguments saw that Plath rarely uses setting as a neutral backdrop, but instead as living extension of the speaker's internal torment, entrapment or alienation.
- Explored different interpretations of the poems, including feminist readings, arguing that domestic settings are spaces of entrapment while natural settings offer possibilities of transformation or rebirth.
- Understood how the context of the poet's life was subtly woven into the poetic structures, as Plath used shifting landscapes to mirror the instability of identity, her mental state and convert a place of comfort into a place of pain, such as hospital environments.
- Supported arguments and interpretations with apposite quotations and examples from the poems chosen.

### Limited Responses

- Discussed biographical contextual material regarding Plath's mental health or marriage with limited relevance to the task.
- Treated settings as solely literal description of her real-world homes or hospitals without much focus on the technical mastery of the poetry itself.
- Made inappropriate choices of poems resulting in unconvincing responses, often speculating on the nature of the setting and only referring to the poems in a summative or generalised way.
- Identified some poetic methods generally without exploring their effects or integrating the analysis into the flow of the interpretation.

(b)

### Comprehensive Responses

- Analysed how the poet depicts the sense of a journey in a war-torn landscape by using lexical choices and allusion, with many responses exploring by apt contextual pointing how this physical journey reflects Plath's life and the persona's propulsion toward self-annihilation and rebirth.
- Discussed the nightmarish, mechanised landscape of war and industrial violence, writing on the zoomorphic and terrifying personification of the train 'gigantic gorilla interior' and 'Krupp, black muzzles' for examples.
- Explored the speaker's profound loss of agency, connecting the line 'I am a letter in this slot' to the brutal, depersonalising realities of wartime transport.
- Interpreted the journey as simultaneously physical, historical and psychological, with perceptive analysis of the violent industrial imagery alongside the repeated war imagery which creates an overwhelming sense of inevitability. As one candidate offered: 'Plath presents herself as having become the train itself, full of menace and power'.
- Offered various interpretations of the train. For example as a metaphor for patriarchal society, where the speaker is carried towards an identity she cannot control or where the speaker is 'powerless when faced with the unstoppable force of the train and Time'.
- Analysed the use of questioning in the poem, seeing that simple questions connote the speaker's innocence and vulnerability. Poetic methods such as imagery were closely analysed, as well as the poem's form and its development as a single stanza. Other responses noted how 'Anaphora suggests the slowness and tedium of the journey', whereas the use of dashes creates propulsion and movement to add to the rhythm.
- Considered appropriate biographical context, for example when Plath conflates her suffering and the Jewish genocide to show her shame for and oppression by her father.

### Limited Responses

- Appeared confused about the poem's meaning, offering generalised interpretations broadly linked to some aspects of Plath's biography.
- Attempted literal paraphrasing, which severely limited responses, for example through confusion over the surreal imagery, or when trying to decide where the speaker was physically.
- Discussed the poem and the poet generally, rather than analysing the poem in detail and had limited understanding of the literary features in the poem and their effects.

## Question 8

### Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2

(a)

### Comprehensive Responses

- Demonstrated secure knowledge in selecting appropriate poems and had sufficient understanding to identify literal and metaphorical journeys and not simply travel as movement from one place to another.
- Offered various interpretations of the task and the poems from discussing emotional journeys in *I Have a Rendezvous with Death*, *The Exequy* and *Excelsior* to actual journeys for instance in *The Migrant* and *Excelsior*. These responses also offered a balanced focus on the selected texts and an integrated comparative approach.
- Analysed and structurally contrasted the poems, with some perceptive discussions of how form (such as enjambment, line lengths, caesura) directly mimics the sensation of movement, travel or stagnation.

- Integrated appropriate contextual points into their interpretations and supported arguments with apposite quotation and reference to the poems.

#### Limited Responses

- Had sufficient knowledge for narrative summaries of their chosen poems, which were often a retelling of the events of two journeys, with limited and generalised discussion of the poet's use of language and imagery.
- Offered personal responses in which journeys the candidate had made were summarised, with only limited relevance to the task or connection to the selected poems.

#### (b) Comprehensive Responses

- Demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of the poem's meaning and the poet's concerns and clearly linked the wasp's physical recovery in the sun to the poem's deeper theological transition toward spiritual salvation and divine grace. Such responses focused on the whole poem and its structure. The wasp, initially without faith is revived and inaugurated into religion and acceptance; both the poem and wasp have 'accumulated momentum'.
- Analysed Taylor's extensive use of anthropomorphism and personification, tracing the wasp's actions as it 'chafes' 'rubs' and 'combs' itself, as showing how small physical movements are elevated to human-like rationality. Other responses discussed the anatomical imagery and the use of rhyme, such as blast/wasp, which has a harmonised musicality and noted how the soft pronunciations suggest harmony in nature, despite small turbulences.
- Recognised the sustained personification and appreciated Taylor's celebration of resilience within the natural world, arguing for example how the rhyming couplets signified order and connectivity.
- Integrated contextual material appropriately such as the religious context or the poet's social context. For example 'as a puritan, he lived a modest life and just like the wasp, suffered from cold'.
- Recognised the mock-heroic treatment of the wasp and argued that Taylor elevates an apparently insignificant creature through epic language. Some interpretations saw the poem as a meditation of human perseverance disguised as natural observation.
- Explored Taylor's poetic methods in detail, with awareness of the metaphysical context for example when discussing language, verse form and tone. Other responses were sensitive to the nuances of meaning in simple phrases, for example 'as if' and 'offering for all'.

#### Limited Responses

- Interpreted the poem literally, reducing the wasp to an insect and ignoring its symbolic and theological scale.
- Demonstrated limited knowledge of the poem's meaning and the poet's context as a religious man.
- Had some difficulty interpreting the archaic vocabulary and syntax of this 17<sup>th</sup> century text.
- Wrote descriptive essays about an insect warming in the sun and missing the central religious allegory and the complex mechanics of the extended concept.
- Identified some of Taylor's methods and offered limited analysis of their effects, which was not always linked to an overarching view of the poem's meanings or the poet's concerns.

### Section C Prose

#### Question 9

##### KIRAN DESAI: The Inheritance of Loss

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment on performance
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment on performance

#### Question 10

##### Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment on performance

**(b) Comprehensive Responses**

- Placed the passage within the context of the complete story appropriately and had appropriate knowledge and understanding to discuss the significance of this passage to Marshall's presentation of Da-duh.
- Analysed Marshall's style carefully, considering such literary features as language, dialogue, description and narrative voice and in more developed responses the effects of these choices on the reader.
- Developed informed interpretations of the character and her role in the passage and in the story generally.
- Appreciated Marshall's use of the narrator and the significance to her of the relationship with Da-duh, which some responses developed into analysing how Marshall creates subtle shifts in tone and effect.
- Had some appreciation of appropriate cultural contexts and integrated contextual points relevantly into the flow of their interpretation.

**Limited Responses**

- Paraphrased and summarised the content of the passage with intermittent consideration of the presentation of Da-duh or her significance here and in the wider text.
- Were unsure of the details of the complete story or the relationship between the narrator and Da-duh, limiting the effectiveness of the commentaries offered.
- Had personal responses which in some cases lapsed into outlining the candidate's own relationships with grandparents, not fully connecting points to the question.
- Had limited knowledge and understanding of appropriate contexts and were in some cases responding as if to an unseen passage.

**Question 11**

**EVELYN WAUGH: A Handful of Dust**

- (a)** There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment on performance
- (b)** There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment on performance

**Question 12**

**COLSON WHITEHEAD: The Underground Railroad**

- (a)** There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment on performance
- (b)** There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment on performance

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/23

Drama, Poetry and Prose Paper

## Key messages

### What candidates did well

- Candidates who performed particularly well in the **(a)** questions clearly had at least a sound knowledge of events, themes and characters and their relationships to each other (Albee, John and Shakespeare).
- In the **(b)** questions, many candidates covered the whole of the passage, selecting key points rather than giving equal weight to every line, resulting in a clearer, more competently analytical approach.
- The majority of candidates showed evidence of appropriate preparation in selecting relevant material with which to address the given tasks and often had at least a straightforward knowledge of their two texts.
- Some candidates confidently drew interesting, sometimes perceptive, contrasts between characters, particularly in the Albee and John responses.
- Many candidates integrated references to language, rhythm and imagery into an overall interpretation, leading to more relevant points and a more structured approach.

### What candidates needed to improve

- When discussing dramatic texts, candidates could have shown more understanding of the effects of dramatic devices behind ideas of 'presentation', remembering that an audience would be present during a performance and dramatic devices are designed to produce particular dramatic effects, often communicated through careful stage directions.
- The ability to analyse a text could be further developed, to improve confidence when applying and discussing a wide range of literary methods and their effects, for example a clearer understanding of dramatic irony.
- Creating a more balanced response to **Section A** questions: giving detailed attention to both poems instead of reducing the second to a brief, concluding paragraph, as seen in Songs and Angelou would improve the structural approach.
- Some candidates need to focus more on the detail of the given passages in option **(b)** questions, instead of using an overly summative approach which leads to narrating and explaining rather than analysing.
- Incorporating a more secure contextual knowledge into relevant sections of essays would help some candidates develop a clearer basis for argument and analysis. A little more understanding of the characters' circumstances at particular points in the text would help in developing fuller responses in drama essays, for example.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section A: Drama

#### Question 1

#### EDWARD ALBEE: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

##### **(a) Comprehensive Responses:**

- Showed a good understanding of the text and context and how the two marriages portrayed either challenged or reinforced contemporary attitudes.

- Recognised the complexity of the relationship between George and Martha with one candidate pointing out that Nick and Honey were often observers, acting as ‘an extension of the audience.’
- Developed some sharp comparisons between the seasoned, co-dependent marriage of George and Martha and the transactional, superficial relationship of Nick and Honey.
- Analysed marriage not as a stable background element, but as an evolving psychological battleground built on shared illusions.
- Demonstrated how Albee uses bitter dialogue and structural game-playing (*‘Humiliate the Host’*, *‘Get the Guests’*) to show that both relationships rely on deceit to survive.
- Highlighted how the younger couple’s flaws actively mirror and forecast the deep-seated resentments of the older generation.

**Limited responses:**

- Discussed characters more as real people and less as literary constructs.
- Would have benefited from a fuller understanding of Albee’s dramatic mechanisms to reveal deeper issues which might have produced a more comprehensive response, as opposed to moral judgements, for example, *‘George and Martha are mean to each other’*.

(b)

**Comprehensive Responses:**

- Were able to put the passage in context and discuss the effect of the scene on the audience, showing understanding of the dynamics between the characters.
- Picked up on the dark humour such as George’s final words, referencing the theatre of the absurd.
- Covered the whole of the passage, selecting key points rather than giving equal weight to every line.
- Identified and discussed the profound tonal contrast between Martha’s erratic, vocal panic (*‘YOU ... CAN’T ... DO ... THAT!’*) and George’s terrifyingly calm, systematic declarations (*‘our son is dead’*).
- Analysed the stage craft and movement, noting for example how Nick physically restrains Martha visually heightened the feeling of domestic containment and helplessness.
- Analysed George’s use of the *Kyrie eleison* prayer as a liturgical weapon to finalise the destruction of their shared myth.

**Limited responses:**

- Were only partly focused on the stage directions and Albee’s use of capitalization, for example, with limited understanding of a dramatic performance. More confidence in this aspect might have enabled some candidates to treat the play as more than just a written text.
- Tended to summarise rather than consider Albee’s use of language, which might have led to greater acknowledgement of the audience’s response.
- Greater textual knowledge and development would enable candidates to treat the son’s death less as a literal biographical fact, without missing the underlying reality that the ‘son’ was a mutual fiction being ritually executed by George. This misunderstanding led some candidates, for example, to misread Martha’s anger as literal grief.

**Question 2**

**ERROL JOHN: Moon on a Rainbow Shawl**

(a)

**Comprehensive Responses:**

- Gave highly insightful socio-cultural commentary, with candidates evaluating how domestic roles are shaped by financial scarcity.
- Compared Sophia’s maternal, long-suffering protectiveness over Charlie, Mavis’s transactional independence, and Rosa’s vulnerable reliance on Ephraim.
- Linked these varying attitudes directly to limited systemic power, demonstrating how John uses domestic conflict to show women either resisting or succumbing to male instability.

**Limited responses:**

- Offered purely narrative summaries of the individual arguments in the yard, with insufficient organisation of their responses around a clear thesis, so that essays became unfocused and generalised.

- Did not consider John's dramatic methods and concerns in sufficient detail, such as specific feminine attitudes, for example, or the dramatic effects of those clashes, which might have allowed for more developed arguments.
- Discussed contexts in general terms rather than finding specific points to support the interpretation offered.

**(b) Comprehensive Responses:**

- Perceptive responses focused on the symbolism of the moon as a motif for upward mobility and escape.
- Analysed John's sensory language: for example, contrasting the grating, oppressive reality of Eph's job ('howling hurricane') with Esther's idealised innocence ('hiss of the wires').
- Unpacked John's use of tender stage directions, noting for example how Eph handing the sleeping baby to Esther acts as a visual passing of paternal care and generational hope.

**Limited responses:**

- Treated the extract as a conversation about trolleybuses or childcare, with limited focus on the deeper underlying tensions and development of characters, with limited contextualisation of the passage to the wider text.
- Analysed John's dramatic methods too generally, for example ignoring Eph's soft, whispering tone – perhaps exploring his need to escape the yard, clashing with Esther's innocent assumptions about his career advancement.

**Question 3**

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Tempest**

**(a) Comprehensive Responses:**

- Established clear contrasts between Prospero/Miranda and Alonso/Ferdinand, showing secure knowledge and understanding of the text.
- Evaluated how parental authority is used by Shakespeare to shape the audience response to his concerns, such as dynastic politics, and to develop the dramatic structure of the play.
- Highlighted Prospero's role as both a loving father and an orchestrator of Miranda's fate, noting how Shakespeare uses staging to show her moving from isolation to public prominence.
- Compared Prospero's role with that of Alonso and his guilt-ridden grief over Ferdinand, arguing that filial relationships can serve as primary catalysts for forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Integrated appropriate textual and contextual references in support of their interpretations.

**Limited responses:**

- Demonstrated a summative approach, tending to explain ideas rather than analyse Shakespeare's presentation.
- Showed a partial appreciation of Shakespeare's dramatic methods, with occasional discussion of the effects of his language choices.

**(b) Comprehensive Responses**

- Demonstrated at least a competent knowledge and sound understanding of the passage and explored the textual context appropriately.
- Analysed Shakespeare's dramatic methods thoughtfully, such as setting, staging and action, as well as exploring the effects of language choices in creating tension and as a tool of characterisation.
- Focused on theatrical stagecraft with theatrically aware responses from well-prepared candidates, demonstrating perceptive understanding of the genre. For example, discussing how the initial '*solemn and strange music*' and '*gentle actions*' create a false sense of security that is suddenly broken by the sensory shock of '*thunder and lightning*' and the vanishing banquet.
- Analysed particular moments in the passage fully, such as Ariel's terrifying personification as a Harpy with a sharp focus on verse delivery, with some candidates noting how his rhythmic, unyielding language exposes the '*three men of sin*', shifting the psychological balance of power.

**Limited responses:**

- Tended to offer summaries of the passage and retell the story of the three men of sin in detail, with only occasional reference to the detail of the passage.
- Might have focused more on the dramatic structure of the episode, including the importance of the Harpy's speech to the meaning and effects of the play.
- Showed some knowledge of the plot of the play, though were at times unsure about the magical elements, which were discussed as simple entertainment rather than a calculated moral trope designed by Prospero.

**Question 4**

**JOHN WEBSTER: The Duchess of Malfi**

**(a) Comprehensive Responses:**

- Selected relevant moments from the play to support a structured and focused response to the question, often successfully grappling with the grim, fatalistic themes of Jacobean tragedy.
- Highlighted the stark contrast created by Webster's dramatic choices between the Duchess's stoic, Christian dignity in her final moments (*'I am Duchess of Malfi still'*) and her brothers' cowardly, undignified breakdowns when facing their mortality.
- Analysed how Webster uses a lexical field and landscape of dark imagery, executioners, and tombs to show death as both an engine of terror and a tool for ultimate spiritual liberation.
- Integrated appropriate contextual references, while maintaining focus on the play and the task.
- Demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of the text and confident appreciation of Webster's dramatic methods.

**Limited responses:**

- Summarised the deaths of the characters in turn, often in impressive detail, with only some reference to the different attitudes that Webster is creating.
- Analysed some aspects of Webster's methods, such as language and imagery, with occasional supporting quotation, though often revealing a limited appreciation of the drama genre and the concept of theatrical performance.
- Presented relevant personal responses to the question, without fully supporting ideas with specific examples and quotations from the play.

**(b) Comprehensive Responses:**

- Securely placed the passage within the play as a whole and were able to develop arguments rooted in the contextualisation.
- Focused on Webster's linguistic choices and their effects. For example the verbal intimidation used by the brothers such as Ferdinand's disturbing, aggressive imagery (*'rank pasture'*, *'give the devil suck'*) and his physical brandishing of his father's poniard as explicit threats of domestic containment.
- Highlighted the Duchess's calculated, ironic defiance in her asides and concluding soliloquy (*'I winked and chose a husband'*), showing how her language establishes her as an active, independent protagonist.
- Understood the significance of the passage in terms of the play's plot and Webster's characterisation of the Duchess and her brothers.

**Limited responses:**

- Relied on simple character description, such as labelling Ferdinand as *'crazy'* and the Cardinal as *'cold'*.
- Summarised what happened to the Duchess in the play as a whole, as well as her relationships with her brothers, though focus on the detail of the passage was in some cases uneven.
- Made general points about Webster's concerns in the play, with occasional supporting quotation from the passage.

## Section B: Poetry

### Question 5

#### Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise

(a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment on performance

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of the poem and the text, often making appropriate contextual connections.
- Focused on Angelou's use of personification to present the natural world as '*patient and irrepressible*'.
- Produced some insightful analysis and sensitive response to imagery, for example discussing the effects of the change of tone at the ending of the poem with the '*golden riot*' and '*defiance*'.
- Analysed how Angelou creates the sensory contrast between the stale, decaying weight of history ('*gelid breath*', '*dead masters*') and the vibrant, explosive defiance of nature ('*poppies dance/In golden riot*', '*Sunlight casts defiance*').
- Analysed Angelou's poetic methods and their effects, including verse form, structure and language.
- Supported arguments with appropriate quotation from the poem and references to the wider text.

**Limited responses:**

- Showed limited familiarity with the poem and had some difficulty writing on form, structure and language, offering a literal, prose-like summary of a walk through California.
- Focused on other concerns rather than the natural world, with a consequent loss of focus on the given task.
- Sometimes misinterpreted details of the poem, such as abstract terms like '*phantasmalities*' or '*antiquitous faces*'.
- Were at times unaware of the poem's thematic tension between the constraints of the past and the creative liberation of the present, which might have led to more developed responses.

### Question 6

#### WILLIAM BLAKE: Selected Poems from Songs of Innocence and of Experience

(a) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Demonstrated secure knowledge of the poem's meaning and confident understanding of Blake's concerns.
- Tracked the speaker's emotional evolution from vulnerability to paranoid isolation, with understanding of the psychological and defensive shifts within the poem.
- Analysed the tone of the poem effectively. For example the ironic transition in stanza 3, where the speaker's defence mechanism turns into a self-imposed prison ('*arm'd my fears/With ten thousand shields and spears*').
- Effectively linked the final image of 'grey hairs' to Blake's concern about the tragic waste of life caused by suppressing desire and rejecting genuine spiritual connection.
- Supported their interpretations with appropriate contextual points and relevant references to the wider text.
- Explored Blake's poetic methods thoughtfully, with insightful commentaries on language, imagery, use of the first person, dialogue and verse form.

**Limited responses:**

- Had limited knowledge of the poem's meaning and Blake's concerns, for example treating the poem as a literal fairy tale about an actual angel.
- Were able to identify some poetic features and give examples, such as enjambement and caesura, with some limited sense of their significance to the poem's overall effects and meaning.

- Considered contextual issues such as religion and industrialisation, though with only occasional relevance to the given poem.

#### Question 7

##### SYLVIA PLATH: Ariel

- (a) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Demonstrated secure knowledge of the poem's meaning and confident understanding of Plath's concerns in the poem and in the wider text, often highlighting the shift from light-hearted domestic delight to sudden, shocking violence in the final stanza.
- Analysed Plath's poetic methods, including language, imagery, verse form and speaker, with some perception such as noting the bizarre, surreal atmosphere Plath establishes by framing balloons as '*oval soul-animals*' that disrupt '*dead furniture*'.
- Focused appropriately on the closing imagery—the child left staring at a '*world clear as water*' with a '*red/Shred in his little fist*'—interpreting the popped balloon as a profound allegory for the shattering of childhood innocence and the entry into a fragmented adult reality.
- Integrated appropriate contextual points into a well-structured and focused interpretation of Plath's presentation, recognising for example her use of voice and tone to establish the shifting mood and linking that to other poems such as *Poppies*.

**Limited responses**

- Paraphrased the events of the poem, with occasional misreadings of details such as 'yellow cathead'.
- Listed and exemplified poetic features such as alliteration or personification without explaining their impact on the poem's meaning and effects.
- Treated the scene as a literal depiction of a post-Christmas living room, missing the undercurrents of danger and instability that typify this poem and Plath's work generally.
- Imposed a darker and more sinister interpretation on the poem as a result of wanting to share knowledge of other of Plath's concerns from the wider text, though not particularly relevant to the set poem.

#### Question 8: Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2

- (a) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Demonstrated at least a sound knowledge of the poem's meanings and competent understanding of Masfield's concerns, often focusing on the unyielding absorption of the human form into the natural landscape.
- Analysed Masfield's poetic methods in detail, for example his use of sibilance and soft, comforting diction ('*laid at ease*', '*holy spell*', '*sleeps well*') to show that nature provides a peaceful, sacred sanctuary that stands in stark contrast to the violence of human warfare.
- Evaluated the structure of the poem and Masfield's use of poetic form to create the chilling transition where the '*kingly one*' is systematically reduced to '*pitiful bones*' and a '*skeleton*' by the relentless, indifferent cycles of sun, rain, and growing plants.
- Focused appropriately on Masfield's choices of language and imagery, with secure understanding of the effects of his choices on the reader.

**Limited responses**

- Retold the story of the poem, with occasionally an insecure grasp of Masfield's concerns or speculative personal responses about what had happened to the knight.
- Listed basic poetic devices like the rhyme scheme without explaining their effects, such as how the rhythmic, song-like flow mimics the steady movement of the wind and tides that frame the knight's final resting place.
- Were more focused on the poetic narrative than on Masfield's presentation of the knight, leading to generalisations and unsupported assertions.

## Section C Prose

### Question 9 KIRAN DESAI: The Inheritance of Loss

- (a) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.
- (b) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.

### Question 10 Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1

- (a) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.
- (b) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.

### Question 11 EVELYN WAUGH: A Handful of Dust

- (a) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.
- (b) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.

### Question 12 COLSON WHITEHEAD: The Underground Railroad

#### (a) Comprehensive Responses

- Demonstrated secure knowledge in selecting appropriate material with which to address the task and had at least a sound understanding of Whitehead's concerns, supported by well-chosen contextual points.
- Responded appropriately to the contrasting terms in the question, showing engagement with the characters, particularly Cora and Royal, and a sensitive appreciation of the nuances of Whitehead's methods of characterisation.
- Identified key moments in the text to support their argument and were able to use quotation effectively to develop the points made.
- Analysed some of Whitehead's literary methods in detail, such as language choices, settings and use of contrasting characters, with some perceptive appreciation of the effects of his choices within the genre.

#### Limited Responses

- Retold some of the 'brutal and disturbing' events in the novel, without linking these choices back to the specific terms of the question and at times ignoring the suggestion that the novel is also 'hopeful'.
  - Did not fully engage with the literary genre and at times responded to the characters as 'real people' rather than novelistic constructs.
  - Offered detailed summaries of some of the contextual background, particularly to do with slavery, with limited relevance to the given task or to specific moments in the novel.
- (b) There were too few responses to be able to make general comments on responses to this question.