LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

> **Paper 2010/12**
> **Poetry and Prose**

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- answer the question that has been set
- substantiate their arguments with relevant textual references
- explore sensitively the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- do not focus clearly on the question set
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely label or list writers' techniques
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than personal responses to the question.

General comments

There was much evidence of outstanding work this session, where candidates showed both sensitive engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poetry and prose texts they had studied. There were few rubric infringements, and the majority of candidates divided their time well across their two answers for the paper. There were, however, instances of some candidates using solely the extract when answering general essay questions on the Prose texts; this approach was self-penalising as there was insufficient material to draw upon for their answers.

Separately, due to an inconsistency in one part of the rubric, changes to the marking approach were agreed to ensure that no candidates were disadvantaged.

Focus on the question
The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question. Candidates selected relevant material from the text to address the question that had been set. Some less successful responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text but needed to tailor their material more explicitly to the specific demands of the question. Some candidates embarked on a description or sketch of characters or an explanation of themes regardless of what the question asked for. Similarly, some answers to extract questions began by listing themes present in the extract without direct consideration of the question. Candidates should be informed that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward. Less successful poetry responses often worked their way, sometimes exhaustively, through the poem without selecting relevant material, thereby losing focus on the question.

Textual knowledge
The strongest answers showed a detailed knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully integrating both concise quotation and indirect textual references to support their ideas. In answers to poetry and extract questions, these candidates selected relevant detail from the printed poem or extract to support their ideas and to explore the ways in which the writer achieves their effects. The strongest responses to general essay questions showed evidence of an extensive knowledge and included much direct textual reference to support ideas. Less successful responses were often characterised by an uncertain grasp of the detail of the text, with little direct reference to enable them to explore a writer's use of language. Candidates should recognise the importance of revising in detail over a period of time short sections of their set prose text.

Writers' effects

The most convincing responses sustained a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects. In responses to poetry and extract questions, these candidates were successful in integrating much well-selected reference from the text printed in the question paper. Less successful responses often bore little evidence of direct quotation from the text supplied in the question paper and were, consequently, less able to analyse writers' effects closely. By contrast, those who had a detailed knowledge of their texts were better able to produce more successful general prose essays. Some less successful responses commented discretely on connotations of specific words without relating them to the ways in which the words were used in the text; these responses sometimes simply logged features such as alliteration, anaphora and enjambment in poetry essays. There was increasing evidence this session of a confusion about form. Some answers on prose texts used the words 'poem', 'novel' and 'play' interchangeably. This had a detrimental effect when it came to exploring the ways in which prose writers use narration, description and dialogue to convey meanings.

Personal response

There was in the strongest answers much evidence of informed and sensitive personal responses to texts which focused directly on the key words of questions, showing insight and individuality. These responses directly addressed those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'powerful', 'vivid', 'striking', 'memorable' and 'moving'. Less successful responses made either cursory reference to these words or no reference at all, preferring instead to embark on a list of pre-learned themes or character traits.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most responses addressed the question with enthusiasm, focusing first on the child and then on the father. The most successful responses contrasted the different perspectives: the fairy-tale world of the child in which the father is an ogre and the father's understandable desire to teach his son a lesson. Many answers balanced sympathy for the child and the father. The strongest responses explored the detail of the poem, such as the hyperbole used to describe the father and the implications of the use of the word 'mask'. Less successful responses narrated what happens in the 'story' of the poem without analysis.

Question 2

Many responses understood the gradual unfolding of what happens in the poem towards the revelation that the speaker's four-year-old brother had died in a car accident. The most successful responses explored the significance of the title, the words and images relating to grief, the contrasts between the reactions of different people, and the impact of the final line – all explored in relation to the actual question: 'How does Heaney make you feel so sorry for the speaker…?' Less successful responses worked through the poem, explaining content, though without tailoring their points to the demands of the question.

Question 3

The more successful responses focused on the key words 'convey his wonder', commenting on the size of the whales, the precision and deliberateness of their actions, and the mysteriousness of their disappearance. The most successful responses explored closely the effects created by Reading's use of language relating to size, shape and movement of the whales. Less successful responses offered narrative accounts, without referring to 'wonder' and/or offered very general assertions about the structure of the poem.

Question 4

Most answers showed at least some awareness of the poet's celebration of individuality and uniqueness ('one bird', 'one flash'), with an understanding of the cycle of life and a recognition of order in the universe. The most successful answers explored Jennings' use of light and dark imagery, the imagery of movement, the cryptic quality of the language, and the impact of 'Man with his mind ajar'. Less confident answers dealt with only a very few discrete features of the poem without seeing their significance in the poem as a whole.

Question 5

More successful responses focused on the key word 'powerful' and engaged with the notion of unconventional love, exploring the central metaphor of the onion and how it challenged popular and clichéd Valentine's gifts. The strongest responses showed a sensitive appreciation of the contrast between more optimistic language ('promises light' and 'love') and more unsettling language ('fierce kiss', 'lethal', 'knife'). Less successful responses worked through the poem explaining its content, without relating their points to the key words 'powerful expression'.

Question 6

The more successful answers focused clearly on the key words 'movingly convey' and on 'how' Duffy achieves her effects. They appreciated the impact of the teacher on the speaker, instilling in her a love of poetry. The most successful responses explored the ways in which Duffy presented both the death of the teacher and her charisma and unconventionality. Less effective responses revealed a basic understanding of the situation, giving a flat narrative explanation of the memories, with little focus on the specific demands of the question.

Section B

Question 7

The most successful responses kept the key word 'dramatic' in their sights, exploring the ways in which Brontë portrays Jane's fear and the unsettling chaos, marked by the many exclamations and questions. They compared this with the presentation of Rochester's apparent calmness. Some made reference to the way in which Rochester later elicits Jane's help in dealing with Mason. Less successful responses, whilst showing awareness of the heightened mood, tended to explain what is happening within the extract, but with little evidence of how it connects with the rest of the novel.

Question 8

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

In the few responses seen to this question, candidates tended to work their way through the extract, occasionally with an imperfect knowledge of the situation being described. Some did not realise that the old father being referred to in line 21 of the extract is Nur. The lack of a detailed knowledge of the plot and characters meant that it was difficult for candidates to focus on what is 'disturbing' in the extract.

Question 10

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 12

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Most answers showed an understanding of Catherine's unhappiness and of Morris trying to force the pace by suggesting they marry. The more successful responses expressed Catherine's predicament very well: she is reluctant to cast herself off from her father, asking for time from Morris who is applying undue pressure on her by accusing her of insincerity. Less effective response picked on discrete features of the extract, without showing an appreciation of the nuances of the exchange between the two characters.

Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

Successful responses focused on the key words 'powerfully dramatic', analysing the ways in which Knowles builds tension, and showing an appreciation of structure and form. The strongest responses evaluated the Brinker/Gene dynamic through the use of language relating to a trial ('charge', 'rankest treachery', 'fratricide', 'arresting hand', 'court', 'confession', 'scene of the crime'). Less successful responses offered narrative rather than analytical approaches and misread the tone, for example, of Gene's responses. More exploration of form, in particular the use of dialogue, could have lifted answers.

Question 16

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 17

Most candidates showed an awareness of the significance of this moment in relation to the wider novel. They commented on the theme of power and totalitarianism, with some relating the figure of Big Brother to Hitler and Stalin. They were aware of the fate awaiting Winston and understood the significance of O'Brien and Room 101. The strongest responses explored the ways in which Orwell presents Winston's thoughts and feelings at this key moment in the novel, with his recognition that he will be shot and his admission that he hates Big Brother. Less effective responses worked through the extract explaining its content but without tailoring their material to an analysis of how Orwell makes this such a powerful moment.

Question 18

The most successful responses maintained a focus on the key word 'intriguing'. They noted Julia's mental and emotional strength, her promiscuity, her deals with the black market, her initiating the relationship with Winston. They focused on Orwell's use of her as a foil to Winston: more confident and rebellious than him. They commented on the significant change in her character in her final appearance in the novel. Less successful responses offered only surface knowledge of the character; there was a lack of textual detail to support general responses.

Question 19

Most responses showed an understanding of this moment's position within the wider novel: Stephen's distress that his search for Absalom has ended in this way; his disappointment in Absalom; Absalom's inability to communicate. The strongest responses explored the forbidding setting (the great gate in the grim high wall), the brief questions and answers, the sequence of rhetorical questions in the final paragraph and what they reveal of Absalom's emotional turmoil. Less effective responses narrated or paraphrased tracts of the extract, digressed into long discussion of extraneous context and/or lacked a focus on the key word 'powerful'.

Question 20

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Only the most successful responses focused closely on the question, selecting just those details from the extract and the wider story that addressed the question. They explored the significance of references to Pygmalion, the tone of voice attributed to Claydon and the narrative viewpoint in shaping readers' response to Claydon. Less effective responses confused Claydon and the narrator, showing an insecure knowledge of the story. Some responses started with a statement about the themes present in the story, but with little (if any) attempt to make their material relevant to the question.

Question 22

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

> **Paper 2010/13**
> **Poetry and Prose**

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- answer the question that has been set
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- explore sensitively the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- do not focus clearly on the question set
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely label and list writers' techniques
- refer to 'structure', without linking to the question
- include excessively long quotations with inadequate explanation
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than personal responses to the question.

General comments

There was much evidence of outstanding work this session, where candidates showed both sensitive engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poetry and prose texts they had studied. There were few rubric infringements, and the majority of candidates divided their time well across their two answers for the paper. There were, however, instances of some candidates using solely the extract when answering general essay questions on the Prose texts; this approach was self-penalising as there was insufficient material to draw upon for their answers.

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Less successful responses often commented discretely on connotations of specific words without relating them to the ways in which the words were used in the text; these responses sometimes simply logged features such as alliteration, anaphora and enjambment in poetry essays.

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There was in the strongest answers much evidence of informed and sensitive personal responses to texts which focused directly on the key words of questions, showing insight and individuality. These responses directly addressed those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'powerful', 'vivid', 'striking', 'memorable' and 'moving'. Less successful responses made either cursory reference to these words or no reference at all, preferring instead to embark on a list of pre-learned themes or character traits.

Separately, due to an inconsistency in one part of the rubric, changes to the marking approach were agreed to ensure that no candidates were disadvantaged.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was generally answered well. Candidates showed clear understanding of the central theme of the attempt to amend the damage to earth by humanity. Stronger answers paid careful attention to the ways in which effects were created and provided well-developed personal responses which showed a clear appreciation of the power of the moonlight. Many of these explored the significance of the title and commented on the movement and progression of the moonlight. They also noted the tone change and the move from nature to man-made in the poem.

Less successful answers did not explore the writing effects in detail and missed the significance of language features such as the personification of the night or the use of repetition.

Question 2

This was by far the most popular poetry question. Answers were generally well done, engaged and focused on the question. There were some very good personal responses which probed beyond surface meaning and were sensitive to the mother's predicament and behaviour. The best answers recognised the narrator's double voice of past and present and explored the adult's emotions looking back. Stronger candidates focused on the recurring image of the mouth and the link to mood and struggle. There were some particularly successful conclusions which recognised the irony of having 'plenty' now but lacking family bonds.

Less successful responses were tempted to write about any language feature, whether or not it was linked to the focus of the question. There were many comments on asyndetic listing and enjambement which did not explain clearly enough how these features work. Some candidates focused on the general autobiographical account of the poet's childhood with the odd reference to the mother and did not explore the despair of the mother struggling to make ends meet.

Question 3

Although most candidates responded to the sense of mystery in this poem, the quality of answers varied across all mark bands. The most successful answers understood the primordial nature of the Kraken and effectively explored the language of darkness, the depths and strangeness of the ocean.

Weaker candidates tended to paraphrase the poem with quotations overflowing but little explanation.

Some candidates mistook the flora and fauna around the Kraken for the Kraken itself. There were quite a few responses that assumed the Kraken was a metaphor for man's destruction of nature or the evil inside man – but these were not very convincing or rooted in evidence.

Question 4

This was a less popular question. Successful answers appreciated the allusions and metaphors and showed an impressive understanding of how Keats portrays melancholy. They explored, with sensitivity, the range of imagery to do with the underworld, death, love and beauty.

Some less successful responses did not fully understand the meaning of melancholy and considered only the first stanza in their response. A few focused for too long on the imagery of the underworld, giving detailed accounts of the Greek mythological figures and the symbols of the underworld.

Question 5

This question was quite popular and generated many heart-felt responses which reflected on the confusion of feelings experienced by the poet. A number of responses offered a very personal and modern interpretation but needed to keep the context in mind. For example, 'What are you wearing' often resulted in a response about control. Successful answers clearly focused on the significance of the letters and their effect. These answers recognised the change of tone between the present narrator and that of the past and the threatening and violent language that appeared as the poem progressed. These also paid close attention to language and were able to clearly explain the significance of the metaphors.

Less successful answers offered straightforward explanations without a detailed response to the writing effects. Some candidates did not recognise that the phrases in italics were quotations from the letters.

Question 6

Although this was not a popular choice, there were some perceptive answers which responded to the question with detailed analysis of imagery and language. Most candidates recognised the different ways in which people pray and that prayer is not necessarily connected with organised religion. Personal responses were strong and engaged with the notion of reminiscing on youth, despair and loss. There was an impressive number of candidates who understood the radio shipping areas and the impact of the last line.

Less successful answers struggled with the abstract notions of the poem and responded on a literal level.

Section B

Question 7

Responses to this question were varied although there was usually some focus on the 'disturbing' aspects of the passage and some recognition of the gothic qualities of the scene. Stronger answers responded in detail to the rich imagery, in particular the description of Bertha, and were able to comment on the subtext – that Rochester's stilted responses revealed he knows more than he is saying. Some stronger answers made valid links to incidents outside of the passage, for example, the similarities of this moment and the red room scene.

Less effective answers tended to offer narrative accounts with little contact with the passage. A few responses started with very long introductions to set the scene, and did not link these to the question.

Question 8

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 10

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

A small number of candidates attempted this question and most showed some understanding of the passage and wider novel. The best responses looked mainly at the three areas – dreams and ships, the porch sitters then Janie. They explored what was powerful about this opening and provided strong personal responses in which they expressed empathy for the porch sitters and then their poor behaviour towards Janie. They provided some perceptive comments about Janie's situation, and responded in detail to the imagery in the passage, for example, the imagery used to describe Janie's physical features and the references to the sun.

Weaker responses tended to run through the passage in a descriptive or explanatory manner without much reference to the imagery used or focus on the question. There was a tendency to explain at length what happened in the rest of the novel. Some candidates missed the opportunity to comment on Janie's recent experiences – that she had witnessed violent deaths and been through a trial.

Question 12

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Very few candidates chose this question. Those who did responded in varying degrees to the tension in the scene. The strongest responses explored the language between the two men and were aware of how they revealed themselves through the dialogue. Many candidates highlighted the way Catherine's father disrespects her.

Weaker responses were limited in their range of points and offered a narrative account with little appreciation of the language and structure.

Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

Most responses focused with some success on the tension in the scene. The most successful responses accurately placed the scene in context and noted details such as Brinker's significance within the school community. They evaluated the implications of Brinker's 'light-hearted' comments and understood the deeper implications about his apparent pleasantness and Gene's agitation. Some of the stronger answers picked up on the symbolism of the rivers and the clothes.

Weaker responses lacked focus and some interpreted the passage literally, not understanding the implications of Brinker's veiled comments.

Question 16

A very small number attempted this question mostly with limited success suggesting they either did not know the text well or were unable to draw out the relevant information from the text.

Question 17

This was by far the most popular question and there were many strong answers. Most candidates were able to respond to the question, identifying some of Winston's mixed thoughts and feelings. The image of Winston as a 'monster' and his vision of himself as a 'dead man' were addressed well and most candidates were able to comment on the loneliness, fear and confusion that Winston felt. Stronger answers recognised the symbolism in the extract and the change of Winston's feelings from beginning to end.

Less successful answers wavered in their focus and some candidates got caught up in their general comments about totalitarianism rather than its effect on Winston. Some candidates neglected to mention Winston's changing feelings embracing hope and determination. A few weaker responses either misunderstood the text or included extraneous details in their argument.

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Question 18

Responses to this question were less successful than the extract question. Many of these responses relied entirely on the extract (**Question 17**) as their source and as a result their answers were self-penalising as there was insufficient material to draw upon. Teachers should alert candidates not to do this. There was much in the text that candidates could have included, such as Winston's work and role at the Ministry of Truth, the descriptions of the grim buildings, or the unpleasant surroundings and the canteen.

Question 19

Stronger responses to this question recognised the significance of this moment and appreciated the bond between the two men because of their loss. They focused on how the moment was 'moving' and explored the nuances in the dialogue and descriptions of the physical responses of the two men. They commented with sensitivity on the writing features such as repetition of phrases, authorial comment and the impact of the last line.

Less successful answers did not provide enough close textual analysis and commented more on the event taking place. Some responses tended to be narrative or a straightforward run through of the passage. Candidates did not address the dialogue or authorial comment and there was little response to the way in which effects were achieved.

Question 20

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Most candidates who answered this question showed some understanding of the old man, his journey and his thoughts and actions but there very few who achieved the higher band marks. A few of the stronger answers commented on writing features such as the dialogue, cultural details and stream of consciousness narration but most did not pick up on the 'striking' elements of the passage. There was a tendency to run through the passage, giving a straightforward narrative account. A few of the weaker scripts showed excessive empathy or moralising at the expense of close reading of text and struggled to provide points that were relevant.

Question 22

A small number of candidates chose this question and generally showed understanding of the story. Most were able to provide relevant points to answer the question and there were some engaged and empathic answers with a focus on the key word, 'admirable'. Less successful answers were largely descriptive or narrative. A few did not fully understand the passage and their responses were on a literal level.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

| Paper 2010/22 |
| Drama |

Key messages

- The most successful answers referred to the question in a brief introduction and avoided lists of the writer's techniques to be addressed.
- Responses to passage-based questions which understood the context of the passage in the play, but also explored passage itself, in some detail, were the most successful.
- Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and gave a precise, wide range of reference.
- Identifying technical literary terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and dramatic impact on the audience is an unproductive approach.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates knew their set texts well and were able to demonstrate their knowledge whilst focusing closely on the terms of the question, choosing their material effectively. They engaged with the characters and themes, conveying their enjoyment of the texts studied. They demonstrated their ability to quote from texts to support their comments and developed the argument effectively. The best responses were able to write a sentence or two to contextualise a passage before analysing well-selected material, drawing close links to the question throughout. There was a notable improvement in the use of quotations to support ideas, in the discursive responses this year, an indication perhaps, that more candidates are attempting to learn specific detail for use in the closed book examination.

A less successful approach was where candidates wrote all they knew about a text, or character, without linking it to the specific question. The tendency to retell the plot up to the start of a specific passage, before attempting to focus on the question, and formulaic approaches, where the same point introduced and ended a paragraph, resulted in unnecessary repetition and valuable examination time being wasted. Though many candidates seemed to know their texts, characters and themes, they had not developed the skills required to analyse; they should be encouraged to move beyond the 'Point plus evidence' approach and to spend time analysing the effects achieved by the writer's choices of language, before moving on to their next point.

Successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as drama, referring to the 'audience', rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', as well as exploring the author's methods to convey the texts' main concerns. Perhaps as a consequence of the lack of opportunity to see live performances during the pandemic, many candidates struggled to explore the dramatic impact of texts. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. It is unhelpful for candidates to be stating the obvious, that the writer uses, 'language' or 'diction' to convey ideas.

The most popular texts were *Romeo and Juliet, The Crucible,* and *A Raisin in the Sun.* There was an increase in candidates answering on *The Crucible* this series. However, candidates should be made aware that it is not a productive use of examination time to preface responses to this text with lengthy introductions about the religious, social, and historical background of Salem, or the political context of McCarthyism in the United States in the 1950's, in response to questions on this text. There were two new texts, William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and R C Sherriff's *Journey's End,* but there were very few responses to either text.

Candidates endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly. However, there are still a few candidates answering the discursive question on the passage which resulted in some low marks as these responses were self-penalising. There were several rubric infringements where candidates either answered two questions on the same text or, did not answer one passage-based and one discursive essay. Though there were some brief answers, very few candidates appeared to run out of time.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

(a)   This was a popular choice of text and question. It was pleasing that the candidates engaged with what was 'striking' here. The most successful responses engaged with the idea of Beneatha as an ambitious, strong-willed, modern woman who pushes the boundaries, and seemed to enjoy her sarcasm and feisty nature. Her strong presence in the scene was well understood as well as what she represents in the play. This latter element led some candidates a little astray as they wanted to write about Beneatha mainly as a symbol of the fight against racism and sexism which sometimes meant that the material in the passage was disregarded. Better responses developed the subtleties of Beneatha defending Mama's right to the money whilst hoping that she will pay for her tuition. Beneatha's relationship with Walter is key here and the bickering between them was explored by most responses. The sarcastic tone and amusing insults gave plenty of opportunity to look at language. The best answers tended to regard the bickering as an example of a long familiar mode of address, based on sibling rivalry, rather than real antipathy; to say that she 'hated' her brother is to overstate. Similarly, to say that Beneatha 'pitied' the family or 'despised' Walter and/or Ruth, as some did, is not supported by the text. Some candidates did not react at all positively to Beneatha here, seeing her as arrogant, selfish, even cruel, as opposed to wilful or immature, though the conversation about the money shows her as fundamentally honest and fair. The big section of stage direction at the start caused a few problems; and many spent less profitable time paraphrasing, particularly the information about her accent.

Less successful responses worked through the passage with little focus on the question and made straightforward comments about Beneatha and aspects of her personality. Weaker answers wrote about her in the play and paid little attention to the details of the passage, missing the description of her appearance and behaviour here completely.

(b)   Fewer candidates answered this question, and many struggled with the idea of the family as 'victims', working through the text, and listing their many problems in a narrative based manner. More successful responses cited some key ideas: the Youngers as victims of poverty, racial prejudice and fraud, and balanced it against the fact that they were better off than many and, in the end, they were able to stand up to Lindner. Very few were able to frame their ideas into the shape of an argument and to illustrate them closely from the text. Surprisingly, few mentioned the loss of the money.

Less successful responses dealt vaguely with racism and being poor but with little textual detail or link to the question: these worked through examples of their poverty, or the discrimination they suffered, without even mentioning the word 'victim' and often reinterpreting the question as 'deserving sympathy'.

ARTHUR MILLER*: The Crucible*

Question 2

(a)   This was a popular text and question. A successful response to passage-based question requires the passage to be briefly contextualised. To answer this question, some sense of the context was essential; the dramatic irony that we know Proctor has confessed his adultery and Elizabeth does not is crucial to the tension. As this is the climactic moment in the play it was disappointing that so many candidates did not seem to be able to place it. The best considered the earlier scene and Elizabeth's seemingly unforgiving nature and how this positions the audience to expect a truthful answer which is not given. Many candidates of all abilities did not deal with Elizabeth's answer or its significance. As always, candidates needed to comment on what is in the scene but also how it relates to the wider presentation of the character/themes. The understanding of dramatic irony

varied, with some candidates struggling to make this explicit, but the more successful responses were able to fully engage with the audience's feeling of unbearable tension and anticipation. Many responses mentioned the contextual link to Miller's experience of McCarthyism, however few expanded on this or linked it to the scene in a way that could be rewarded. This question stimulated some strong personal responses with much sympathy for John's and especially Elizabeth's predicament.

All candidates recognised that there is tension in the extract. Better answers put the passage in context and therefore could examine how the tension builds until Elizabeth's answer. There was a real opportunity to comment in detail on language and the way the writer created effects in this question. Danforth's increasing verbal and physical aggression was well handled as were Elizabeth's nervousness and her attempts to protect John. Candidates referred to the stage directions effectively here though there was some misunderstanding of the stage direction '*faintly*', where several candidates thought Elizabeth was on the verge of fainting, rather than speaking quietly, as she pronounced the fateful lie.

Less successful responses often did not know that Proctor had already confessed and worked through the passage paraphrasing the action with little understanding of what was at stake here. There was some misunderstanding of the relationship between Proctor, Abigail and Elizabeth, with weaker responses referring to a 'love triangle' and Elizabeth's attempt to protect all, rather than her husband.

(b)   Fewer candidates attempted this question. For this to be more than a straightforward character profile of Mary Warren, it was essential to focus on the terms of the question, her 'dramatic impact' on the play. Better responses recognised her weakness and changing testimony and analysed her role in the play in relation to Abigail and Elizabeth. Only the best commented on the intense drama of the court scene; how Mary's change of heart signifies the loss of hope for an ending to the witch trials and condemns John Proctor.

Weaker candidates adopted a narrative based approach to Mary and her role in the play but finding little to say about her, so these tended to be brief.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 3

(a)   Candidates who answered on this text tended to know it very well and focused on why, and how, this was both a striking and revealing moment. This question yielded several high-level responses, as candidates were able to reflect on issues of class, hypocrisy and the 'stiff upper lip' attitude that permeates the text. There was some pleasing focus on language specifically on Stanhope's derogatory comments about Hibbert. Most felt that Hibbert was a coward trying to avoid the 'final push': a few sensitive explorations of the text argued that his reaction to war revealed the mental stress that soldiers were under and equated his attempts to get sympathy with Stanhope's seeking refuge in drink. Most could comment on the different dynamic between the three men and the terrible toll the war had taken on them.

Less successful responses adopted the narrative summary approach and tended to focus less on the passage in question and more on war in general. These responses tended to view Hibbert in a particularly harsh light, whereas better responses were more even-handed in their assessment of his behaviour. A few responses incorrectly suggested that Osborne was Stanhope's uncle and misread the nickname.

(b)   Too few seen to make meaningful comment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 4

(a)   This was a popular text and question. The word 'entertaining' was generally interpreted as being comical or amusing, and successful responses identified the humour in the passage, understood what the Nurse is saying in her long speech, and explored how this is entertaining for the audience. They knew the context; the subject of marriage with Paris was to be introduced, and recognised Lady Capulet's awkwardness because of her lack of closeness with Juliet, and her wish to have the

Nurse present for their talk. Most understood her vulgarity, talkativeness and tendency towards anecdote, but only the strongest responses were able to engage with how Shakespeare demonstrated this to show critical understanding of her as a dramatic device to relieve tension in the scene. The Nurse's position as a mother figure to Juliet was understood by all but some candidates who then became distracted by these emotional connections as opposed to focusing on the entertaining moments in this scene. Better candidates explored the rambling nature of her comments and how Lady Capulet had had '*Enough of this*'.

Weaker candidates were unable to move past general descriptions of her behaviour as being inherently entertaining, for example the fact that she 'talks a lot' or 'rambles'. They struggled with the language and simply paraphrased the passage ignoring the question of how Shakespeare made this an entertaining introduction. There were many misconceptions including that '*earthquake*' had a sexual connotation and that it was unusual to have a wet nurse. Very few candidates understood the reference to '*wormwood*' or to her '*teeth*' and what they contributed to make this entertaining. These simply stated that the Nurse was 'entertaining' but without exploring how.

(b) This was a popular question and should have been straightforward, but it proved to be problematic for many candidates leading many to simply retell the story. Most candidates chose to answer the question by explaining what Romeo and Juliet did rather than what they said and how Shakespeare's use of language and stagecraft conveyed their powerful feelings. The most successful responses focused on key moments that illustrated the couple's feelings for each other, for example, the balcony scene, Romeo's banishment and their double suicide. This was a fair question which required basic exam technique to respond successfully. Better candidates explored the depth of feelings which Romeo and Juliet had for each other. Although many better answers did adopt a semi-narrative approach, they selected key scenes to focus on in detail. Popular choices were, the Prologue, the Capulet ball, the balcony scene and the final scene of their double suicide. Many included detailed textual references especially the comparison of Juliet with the sun and stars and the religious language of their first meeting.

Less successful responses relied on retelling the entire play, often losing sight of the task and making very generalised comments about their powerful feelings of love.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 5

(a) Many responses simply ignored the keys words 'such a dramatic moment' and provided a narrative commentary with paraphrase. Better responses placed the passage in context and contrasted Malvolio's pomposity with the revellers, also recognising how his behaviour here leads to the trick being played on him. Most candidates understood that the characters were making fun of Malvolio but seemed unable to take this further. The best responses recognised and explored Malvolio's anger/pomposity/threats and commented on the impact on Sir Toby, who is so drunk he effectively ignores them and carries on singing, deliberately mocking Malvolio. Most were able to recognise the meaning of what Sir Toby says '*rub your chain with crumbs*' but only the strongest candidates commented on his deliberate provocation which is then picked up and continued by Maria. Sir Andrew's line tended to be ignored by most, though a few did manage to make the link to the later challenge. Very few responses commented on how Maria's more 'restrained' reaction was setting up the plot for Malvolio's being gulled.

Weaker answers recognised that the revellers were annoyed with Malvolio, but often overlooked the contributions of the Clown and Maria. Some overstated the fact that Malvolio was of a lower class than Sir Toby but did not take this further and follow the relationship between them through the passage. This would be a very visually entertaining scene but not many appeared to enjoy the humour. Most candidates understood that the characters were making fun of Malvolio but seemed unable to take this further. Feste and Maria were not always mentioned but good candidates saw the importance of Maria's last speech.

(b) Candidates who answered ended up with a list of the different love matches and types of love, and an explanatory narrative about them without really focusing on any specific moments or language detail. Better answers considered various aspects of love depicted and whether they were real or self-indulgent in some cases, like Orsino. Malvolio's self-love was often effectively examined.

Weaker answers often focused on the love triangle, not always accurately, or got side-tracked by the role of disguise in the play. These were very narrative in approach and lacked relevant textual detail to support ideas.

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Key messages

Good answers focused on the question from the start without a general introduction.

Successful answers were planned to cover three or four points, which were well-developed and explicitly addressed the question.

All strong answers made a response to the text in performance and analysed dramatic effects where they were relevant, such as: interaction between characters, movement, sound, dramatic irony and likely audience reaction.

Better answers to passage-based questions analysed the effect of the writing in detail, often selecting words and phrases for analysis where relevant, and considered the author's intentions.

Answers to discursive questions were stronger when candidates used a sound knowledge of the text to select the most appropriate material with which to address the question, and analysed some brief, direct quotation.

General comments

There were first-rate answers on all five plays this session, showing candidates' sustained engagement with their text as a performance and with the playwright's concerns. Many candidates made perceptive personal responses to the complexity of the characters and their situations. Along with Mama, candidates often sympathised with Ruth having to work despite her tiredness due to her pregnancy in *A Raisin in the Sun*; whereas in *The Crucible*, candidates were split between sympathising with Proctor because his wife does not understand him, or with Elizabeth as she finds it hard to trust her husband after his affair. Candidates showed universal empathy for the soldiers in *Journey's End* as they obey orders to fight in the knowledge that they are going to be killed. Many candidates could loosely put themselves in Juliet's situation of disagreeing with her father in *Romeo and Juliet*, and others often revelled in selecting their personal amusing moments from the play. The drama of the passage near the end of *Twelfth Night* has been building from early in the play, with its dramatic irony ensuring the audience and candidates are fully engaged with the action. A clearly stated personal response boosted answers.

A clear response to the text as performance on stage characterised the best answers. When it is difficult for candidates to see plays in performance, then watching a film of a production on stage is a good substitute. Even a cinema film of the play will help to bring the text alive, so long as differences in plot and setting are recognised. Some candidates referred to the plays as 'novels' and to 'readers', rather than 'audiences'. They needed to consider the effects of staging, including movement, sound, dramatic irony and audience reaction.

Strong answers to passage-based questions analysed in detail the effects of interaction between characters and staging. The best answers came from candidates who carefully selected the most appropriate parts of the passage with which to support their answer. In contrast, some answers gave an account of events instead of analysing dramatic effects. Strong answers began by briefly placing the passage firmly in its context, so that a full understanding of the content could be shown. Others focused on the mechanics of writing, such as exclamation marks and full stops, without relating their effects to the meaning of the passage. For example, this was sometimes shown in answers to **Question 2(a)** on *The Crucible*, where the couple's strained relationship is conveyed in contrived questions and monosyllabic replies; but a full understanding of their awkwardness is only revealed when the context of the husband's affair is established.

Answers to discursive questions often showed a thorough knowledge of the set text. Strong answers developed over three or four main points and selected apt material from the whole play to support their response. Candidates improved their answers by analysing their selected reference to show how it supported their answer and addressed the question. Some candidates developed a more general reply to the question, but the answers were limited because the candidate did not know the text well enough to make detailed reference to the text. Other candidates needed to make sure they addressed the terms of the question explicitly, and to maintain this focus through their answer.

Some candidates needed to number their answers clearly. This includes some of those which were typed. There were very few rubric infringements. A few candidates answered two passage-based or two discursive answers on component 23. In this case, only the higher marked answer was credited.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

(a) Good answers placed the passage briefly in its context: that Walter and Beneatha have been arguing about the insurance money, and after this moment Mama reveals her intention to buy a house. Candidates commented on the way that Mama's Christian beliefs are revealed as guiding her life; she does not want the sale of liquor to weigh against her on her 'ledger'. Her Christianity causes later conflict with the younger generation. Candidates also said that Mama's care for her family is revealed: she is concerned about Ruth's health, tiredness and determination to go to work. Some linked Ruth's tiredness to her pregnancy, while others considered the deeper implications of her reluctance to take the day off work, as evidence of the racist society the family live in: Mama suggests that it would be easier for Ruth to pretend to have the 'flu, an illness white people recognise, rather than risk the racist assumptions of her living in a ghetto – racist attitudes are shown by Ruth's mimicking of the way her employer will complain about her. The family's poverty is revealed when Ruth insists on going to work because they 'need the money'. Ruth's uneasiness about the state of her marriage to Walter is revealed when she supports his pitch for money for the liquor store despite her reservations. Perceptive candidates evaluated Ruth's assertion that the insurance cheque belongs solely to Mama; this may be her view, but we already know that Walter is asking Mama for finance, and surely Beneatha will not turn down money for her education.

Stronger answers often ended by giving an overview of the significance of the passage, such as that the cheque is needed to alleviate the family's poverty; or that the passage reveals the future conflict over how the cheque is to be spent. Other answers needed to focus on the passage rather than narrating events from later in the play; some needed to include more detailed reference, such as brief quotation, to support points.

(b) There were strong personal responses to Joseph Asagai; candidates found him very memorable and liked how he respects Beneatha and helps her to appreciate her African heritage, and many candidates responded to how he forms a contrast to the shallow and assimilationist George Murchison. Stronger answers explored Asagai's role as a Nigerian and Yoruba candidate proud of his home country, and keen to share his culture with African-Americans whom he thinks are too assimilated. Most candidates were able to refer in detail to the drama and fun of Beneatha's African dancing dressed in Nigerian robes. Some perceptive candidates explored Asagai's romantic idealism and his own dreams of returning home to make a difference to his people through teaching and politics, to the point of sacrificing his life if required. Asagai changes Beneatha's perspective by encouraging her not to depend on others to achieve her goals.

The best answers directly addressed the question on 'memorable' with well-reasoned personal responses to Asagai. Strong answers used aptly-selected, detailed textual support, in the form of brief, memorised quotations. Some candidates focused more on Beneatha than Asagai and so missed a sense of his wider role. Others incorrectly described Asagai as African-American, which minimised his cultural significance to the play, or made assertions about him with some very general textual reference, or offered no support at all.

ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible*

Question 2

(a)   Candidates needed to place the passage briefly in its context to show understanding of the relationship: Proctor is ridden with guilt over his affair with Abigail, and Elizabeth is finding it hard to forgive and trust him.

Most candidates analysed the stage directions and dialogue well: Elizabeth's suspicious questioning of her husband's late arrival; the dampening effect of her brief replies to Proctor's attempts to draw her out, as well as her lack of response to his kiss, were all seen as evidence of her inability to forgive him. Simpler answers blamed Elizabeth and missed how hard it is for her to trust her husband now; although she is trying, as shown when she blushes at his compliment and is cross at herself for forgetting his cider. Others felt that Proctor was trying too hard, with his flirtatious grin, kissing, and attempted romance over the flowers. Perceptive answers suggested that although both were trying to repair their relationship, Miller made it clear that there was a way to go yet. This was seen in the carefully staged ending to the passage, where both characters surreptitiously watch and judge the other. Strong answers responded explicitly to 'vividly' by analysing the effects of dialogue and staging. There was also some perceptive exploration of imagery, such as the way the blandness of the stew reflects the lack of spice in the marriage and the way it is still 'winter' mirrors its coldness. Some candidates thought Proctor's hopes for renewing his marriage were reflected in his expectation of soon seeing green fields on the farm and in his sensual enjoyment of the abundant flowers.

A common misreading was Proctor's disappointment at Elizabeth's lack of response when he kisses her; some candidates thought it was Elizabeth who was disappointed. Some answers explored the writing in detail, but they needed to explicitly relate their analysis to the content and context of the passage in order to show understanding of the relationship. Others thought Proctor's affair with Abigail was still going on, and Elizabeth did not know. A few brief answers related details of the affair, without much reference to the passage; and a few others tried to link their answers to McCarthyism, without benefit.

(b)   Successful answers had a clear grasp of the events in the play. Most candidates began by stating that Proctor's initial error was the affair with Abigail which provoked Abigail's desire for vengeance on Elizabeth and the start of witchcraft allegations. Some candidates pointed out that if Proctor had exposed Abigail's motives at this early stage, the witchcraft hunt and subsequent deaths may have been avoided. Astute answers blamed Proctor's desire to keep his lechery secret and thus maintain his good reputation for his downfall. Some candidates partly blamed Elizabeth for her initial coldness and then lying in court about Abigail and Proctor's affair. Perceptive candidates explored how such a well-respected man as Proctor could be believed to be guilty of witchcraft; they explored how Proctor's righteous habit of plain speaking created powerful enemies, notably in Parris. Some also considered the part played by Danforth's reluctance to admit that he may have been wrong in believing the girls' claims, and had therefore sentenced innocent people to death. Some candidates focused more on Proctor's final struggle, whether to accept Hale's pleas to falsely confess to witchcraft and save his life. His decision at the end of the play to tell the truth leads him to regain his honesty and good name, but he dies for it.

Answers were not expected to be exhaustive; strong responses developed an argument over three or four selected points using detailed textual support, usually in the form of brief, memorised quotations. Other answers showed confusion over some of the events, especially those leading directly to Proctor's death; some needed to support their points by referring to the text, and a few brief answers only considered Proctor's affair with Abigail.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 3

(a)   To make a good response, candidates needed to place the passage into its context: the 'Big Attack' has started and the men know that they are all likely to be killed shortly. Strong answers clearly stated this as the reason for them sympathising with the men. Strong answers also responded well to how the end is suggested by powerful staging, such as the lack of hope indicated by Trotter's disappearance into the dark, the tiny line of dawn being 'vague', the 'steadily

increasing' shelling and booms of heavier artillery, and the ominous cries for stretcher bearers. Most candidates felt sympathy for Stanhope because he drinks tea rather than his numbing whisky and has a 'quivering' hand which shows his fear. Perceptive answers saw that his inability to meet Raleigh's eyes to say goodbye indicates his guilt at sending men to their deaths. There was much sympathy expressed for Hibbert, who delays 'going up' as long as he can, despite Stanhope seeing through his excuses. Astute answers considered the powerful effect of the dramatic contrast between the cook Mason being 'fully dressed for the line', and the prevaricating Hibbert who 'is the picture of misery'. The kindness of Mason is shown in how he asks Hibbert to show him the way, which forces Hibbert to go without further confrontation with Stanhope, who stands firm in insisting Hibbert carries out orders. More perceptive readers commented on the pathos of Raleigh's shy 'Cheero' to Stanhope, of Mason's careful planning for keeping the kitchen fire going, and even of Hibbert's slow ascent of the steps, when they, and the audience, all know they are likely to die.

Some candidates needed to place the passage more firmly in its context; without the acknowledgement that the men will shortly die, sympathy for their plight is diminished. Some made a more general response to sympathy for the poor conditions in the trenches, in which Hibbert's requests for water were incorrectly interpreted as the men running out of drinking water. A few focused on Stanhope's leadership skills rather than answering the question on sympathy for the men.

(b) Strong answers made clear the circumstances of the raid: it is ordered by the Colonel to gain information about the enemy sited opposite C Company in advance of the 'Big Attack'. Raleigh and Osborne, with ten men, are ordered to go into enemy trenches and bring a German back for questioning. Candidates considered that much of the significance of the raid lies in its obvious danger and loss of life; some pointed out the irony of the raid being seen as successful, even though six men and Osborne were killed. Some candidates focused on the Colonel's initial matter-of-fact meeting with Stanhope when the danger of the raid is pointed out and overridden. Others explored the dramatic build-up of tension between Raleigh and Osborne beforehand, as Osborne ensures the excited Raleigh does not realise the danger. Others considered the ludicrous interrogation of the German captive by the Colonel. Some focused more on the drunken 'celebratory' meal afterwards, while others commented on Raleigh's response after the raid to Osborne's death and to Stanhope. Strong answers selected a few apt references and explored the drama in detail. The significant consequences of the raid were often seen in the change in Raleigh, from naïve enthusiasm to his deadened shock afterwards, and in the loss of Osborne who represented a calm rationality and humanity shown in his nickname 'Uncle'.

Some perceptive answers ended their answers by commenting that the true bravery of soldiers such as Osborne and Stanhope was shown in the way they carried out orders, in the full knowledge of their danger and futility. Some other answers spent too long narrating details of the raid. Some candidates only knew a general outline of the raid and needed to refer to the text in more detail, while others confused the raid with the 'Big Attack' at the end of the play. A few gave general answers on conditions in the trenches.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 4

(a) Good answers placed the passage in its context: Juliet has just accepted a potion to feign death from the Friar in order to avoid having to marry Paris. Candidates needed to remember that she is already secretly married to Romeo. Some candidates commented on the tension caused by the busy start to the passage, with Capulet bustling about, giving orders for arrangements for the wedding to Paris despite his daughter's refusal. Strong answers commented fully on the dramatic irony throughout the passage, underlined by Capulet's ironic comments in praise of the Friar. They showed how the audience finds tension in Juliet's submission to her father's will, dramatically demonstrated by her prostration in front of him, because we know it is all a lie. Some candidates thought the tension created by Capulet's initial insults to Juliet serves to remind us of his harsh threats towards her if she does not do as he wants. They pointed out that the contrasting expression of his happiness and excitement at her apparent capitulation also creates tension, since it is based on Juliet's lies. Many answers commented on the tension being further compounded by Capulet's sudden whim to bring forward the day of the wedding to the next morning, hastening preparations, with the accompanying implications for Juliet in taking the potion, which is only known by the audience. Perceptive answers pointed out that Capulet's determination to stay up all night to

ensure arrangements are made in time is excessive and his emotions are heightened; tensions are raised because the audience knows this is all false and it will all come crashing down.

Most answers explored the use of dramatic irony well. There were a few answers which accepted the surface meaning of the text in Juliet's agreement to marry Paris; some of these wrongly thought Juliet was deciding who to marry, Romeo or Paris, and decided on Paris because of his wealth; they sometimes commented on Capulet's excitement at enforcing his will, but without showing understanding of the tension or irony.

(b) The most frequently chosen amusing moments were scenes with Mercutio, especially the banter between Mercutio, Romeo and Benvolio on the journey to the ball, and Mercutio's encounter with Tybalt. Scenes featuring the Nurse were also popular, such as her first appearance or the scene where she returns from Romeo and withholds his reply to Juliet. Some candidates chose the conflict between the servants Sampson and Gregory, and Abram and Balthasar at the start of the play, because of the comic banter between the men. Candidates' enjoyment of the text was clear from their responses, which often explored the humour of the context and characters in the selected moments well, and made detailed analysis of use of language, which proved particularly bawdy whenever the Nurse or Mercutio were involved.

Other candidates found different moments amusing, and candidates' personal selection was respected where they explicitly identified what they found comical, and where they explored how Shakespeare achieved his effects. Some wrote about the humour of Juliet defying her father when she refuses to marry Paris, and others explored the effects of dramatic irony, where the audience are amused by knowing something the characters do not, such as the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet where the audience already know the lovers are from opposing families. Others made an answer to what they found 'entertaining'.

There were some purely narrative responses which needed to make a relevant response to 'amusing', and there were some responses where the candidate alleged moments to be 'amusing', but then focused on how sad or upsetting they were, referring to moments such as the lovers' suicides at the end. Some other brief answers only addressed one moment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 5

(a) To show a clear understanding of the content of the passage, candidates needed to place it firmly in its context towards the climax of the play: Olivia has previously married Sebastian, believing him to be Cesario. Orsino arrives, with Cesario, to repeat his offers of love to Olivia. Olivia believes Cesario to be her husband. Orsino and Cesario (or rather, Viola) are unaware of Olivia's marriage to Sebastian. Strong answers responded fully to the interaction between characters and to the way they are brought together for this powerfully dramatic conflict, with dramatic irony enhancing the audience's enjoyment of the mayhem.

Candidates commented on the abrupt way Olivia dismisses Orsino, and the comic rudeness of 'fat and fulsome'. Orsino's reaction to her is also dramatic, and strong answers commented on his horrific threats of violence to both Olivia and Cesario, and explored the shocking effects of some of his powerful imagery such as 'marble-breasted tyrant' or 'sacrifice the lamb…To spite a raven's heart'. Perceptive candidates pointed out that Orsino's extreme emotion has been provoked not only by Olivia's consistent rejection of him, but also by her obvious preference for Cesario. Candidates found humour in Olivia's bewilderment at her rejection by her 'husband'; they commented on Viola's passionate declaration of love for Orsino in 'more than my life', and observed that this both compounded Olivia's confusion and built up to the powerfully dramatic climax of her calling Viola 'husband', and the shocked response to this of both Orsino and Viola.

Some candidates spent too long narrating earlier events. A few answers focused heavily on more minor features of language such as exclamation marks and rhetorical questions. These can help to indicate tone or heightened emotions, but rarely provoke a response in an audience on their own.

(b) The best answers made a personal response to three or four selected qualities of Viola's character, then developed them and supported them with detailed reference, usually in the form of brief, memorised quotation. Candidates often found Viola likeable because of her intelligence and quick

thinking, shown in how she deals with Olivia and in their witty exchanges. Some praised Viola's resourcefulness and independence, based on her actions after the shipwreck. Others liked how she is such a genuine person, despite her use of disguise; her constant love for Orsino is genuine and unassumed, in contrast to Orsino's overblown love for Olivia. Perceptive candidates understood that her honesty makes her feel bad about the deception of her disguise and the love triangle she finds herself in. Some candidates liked the comedy generated by Viola, through her disguise, in situations with Olivia and Malvolio, but also in the 'fight' with Sir Andrew. Others said that most of the characters say nice things about Viola: Sebastian loves her deeply, she wins Olivia's love without trying, and even Sir Toby thinks Cesario is 'of good capacity and breeding'.

Some strong responses ended with the observation that, given Viola's good character, she is rewarded by getting what she deserves – Orsino's love and marriage to him. Some answers narrated what happens to Viola in the play. A few wrote about how memorable Viola is, how much sympathy they have for her, or they explored the theme of disguise in the play: these needed to focus on answering the question.