

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/21
Writing

Key Messages

Candidates should focus on the instructions within each question – for example, concentrating on ‘drama and suspense’ for **Question 1** and ‘mood and emotions’ for **Question 6**.

Time management skills are essential: overlong narratives in **Section A** often lead to short, underdeveloped answers for **Section B**.

Candidates should be prepared to spend a few minutes writing out a short plan to ensure the sound and effective structure of an answer. A lack of a plan often leads to diffuse, rambling work.

General Comments

In preparing for **Section A: Imaginative writing**, candidates should safeguard against the confusion of tense forms. If a candidate begins an imaginative writing task in the present tense, they should not switch randomly to the past tense. Candidates tend to produce more effective work when they do more ‘showing’ than ‘telling,’ and thus make the reader feel as if they are in the world created by the narrative or description. Candidates should also try to use a broad range of effects in their work. The descriptive pieces were more successful when the candidate was able to structure the piece around more than one factor. Attempts to invoke the passing of time were more effectively managed in, for example, a piece alternating between the ocean and the beach as the storm raged.

When preparing for **Section B: Writing for an audience**, candidates should be clear about the tone, register and format of magazine articles and print newspaper correspondence (where available), and should prepare various modes of discursive writing in the media. Some appropriate skills in composition and rhetoric should continue to be the focus of exercises. The contrasting pieces were less successful when the candidates were unable to differentiate between the voices or points of view. Candidates should try to use language to convey excitement or hesitation, rather than relying on exclamation marks and dashes. They were more successful when the candidates had strong views themselves or were already well-versed in the arguments surrounding the topic at hand. Many excellent responses contained detailed arguments on either side of the debate. Others needed to develop thoroughly-explained and balanced arguments in order to achieve higher marks.

There was frequent evidence of candidates referring to ‘amounts’ rather than ‘numbers’ of people, and the confusion of ‘less’ and ‘fewer’ occurred even in some of the more competent submissions. Some candidates needed to be more careful with syntax: they either created comma splices or ended sentences without main verbs. Incorrect apostrophe use was evident in some cases, but a more common error was the absence of punctuation. Some candidates seemed to neglect capitals at the beginning of sentences completely. Dangling modifiers were in evidence: candidates needed to remember the danger of beginning a sentence with ‘By ___ing’ formations, especially if participles were not related to the grammatical subject of the sentence. Candidates should also make sure that vocabulary is correctly deployed.

Across **Sections A** and **B** there was a range of technical and structural errors which often impacted on the clarity and accuracy of expression. It was the ability to avoid this tendency which marked the most successful responses.

Generally speaking, centres have prepared their candidates appropriately for this paper. Candidates seemed to enjoy writing **Section A**; in **Section B**, examiners saw a preparedness to argue both sides of the question with a degree of development.

In **Section A**, **Question 1** was more popular than **2** and **3**. However, candidates seemed more confident writing a narrative response than the descriptive piece asked for in **Question 3**. There was still a tendency to write stories in **Question 3**, when descriptive writing was required. Some who did write descriptive pieces needed to make sure not to load sentences and phrases with excessive and inappropriate adjectives. The stories for **Question 1** were more successful when the candidates were able to make good decisions about how much information their readers needed to follow the plot. Structure and vocabulary were sometimes affected negatively when candidates employed flashbacks, dream sequences, and rambling asides in an attempt to 'fill the reader in'.

In **Section B**, all questions were approximately equally popular. The more successful *Writing for an audience* answers kept the target audience in mind throughout and adopted language and structural techniques to match that audience. Less successful candidates needed to remember to use the conventions of different forms, and to establish a mature, credible voice or develop a well thought out, logically organised line of argument. This was particularly true of some responses to **Question 5**, which asked for two reviews, and implied an inherently structured response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Paper 21

Question 1

This was the most popular question. The idea of creating drama and suspense was handled effectively by a good proportion of candidates. However, a number of candidates wrote a story that included a train journey at the beginning but the journey had no real relevance to the plot. Some answers seemed to be adaptations of previously written material.

A lot of the best answers were told from an omniscient point of view, thus enabling the writer to have more narrative control. Many good answers finessed a cliffhanger ending to this 'opening to a story', providing the reader with plenty to think about. The characters sometimes had a chance to be reconciled to their fate. Many worthy attempts at realistic dialogue did not quite succeed in signalling characters' intentions or explaining their motives. Less successful responses typically had no new paragraphs introduced to start a 'new speech', or quotation marks were either partially or wholly missing. Quite often the given opening sentence was either not followed by a comprehensible consequence, or was missed completely.

Question 2

There were some lively answers to the 'restaurant' scenario, reflecting the very different priorities of the luxury-hunting patrons and rushed-off-their-feet 'skivvies' in the kitchen. Some candidates seemed unsure whether to treat this question with a narrative or descriptive approach; either approach was fine, as long as the focus was on 'mood and place'. Better candidates managed to evoke through particular details a real sense of the restaurant's mood and place, while less successful candidates wrote purely narrative responses without focusing on the differing sense of mood and place required by the question. Sometimes the second half of these responses was much shorter than the first.

Question 3

There were some imaginative responses, with some effective description, possibly as this was a subject in which students could draw upon personal experience. However, a lot of candidates provided answers that were mainly narrative, rather than descriptive. In common with previous series' emphasis on extreme weather situations, this question seemed to provoke more narrative situations with perceived suspense and drama woven into the answers. Although candidates were invited to write a 'descriptive piece', some leeway was given to those who included (some) narrative elements, if enough descriptive contrast was evident. The descriptive piece was most effective when candidates wrote about storms they had apparently actually experienced – a piece on a hurricane in Florida and another from the point of view of a person caught out on a boat during a squall – were excellent due to the realism and immediacy of the writing. It is best, however,

to avoid writing too much narrative in response to such a task as this – the descriptive elements are what count.

Question 4

In less successful responses to this task on the subject of shopping, though most candidates were able to formulate some sort of balanced argument, the obvious opposition of the (former) practice of shopping in a small outlet as opposed to the (current) obsession with either mall-entrancement or online consumption often led to clichéd responses. The best candidates were aware of the style required for a magazine article and produced quite professional articles. Less successful candidates limited themselves to a description of the changes in shopping habits without any real attempt to engage the audience. The more successful responses analysed how motivations for shopping, the objects of desire, and the methods of shopping have all evolved and changed over the decades.

Question 5

The most successful answers to this question wove contrasting viewpoints into the reviews very well. Reviews of the school exchanges could be more effectively written when the audience (one's peers presumably) were identified clearly – although some candidates' desire to contrast at all costs sometimes seemed to make the exchange seem like two different occasions. The less successful answers lacked a differentiation in voice between the two points of view.

Question 6

This was a fairly popular question and was generally well handled by candidates, although there was very occasionally some confusion as to who was leaving. Many candidates were successful in using a range of language and rhetorical devices. Candidates wrote coherent and cogent speeches, with a good balance of emotions and factual recollection of the years in the job, often focusing on individual relationships with other members of the company, and how the speaker rose up from the ranks to become the director. Less successful candidates were unable to imagine what a director would say in his final speech. They focused on telling the staff how wonderful they were, reciting problems that they had faced – usually in quite a general way – and wishing everyone the best for continued success. Better answers recalled 'specific' incidents and people who had made an impact on the director. Such details made a piece of work more convincing.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/22
Writing

Key Messages

Candidates should focus on the instructions within each question – for example, concentrating on ‘suspense and mystery’ for **Question 1** and ‘passion and urgency’ for **Question 6**.

Time management skills are essential: overlong narratives in **Section A** often lead to short, underdeveloped answers for **Section B**.

Candidates should be prepared to spend a few minutes writing out a short plan to ensure the sound and effective structure of an answer. A lack of a plan often leads to diffuse, rambling work.

General Comments

In preparing for **Section A: Imaginative writing**, candidates should safeguard against the confusion of tense forms. If a candidate begins an imaginative writing task in the present tense, they should not switch randomly to the past tense. Candidates should also do more ‘showing’ than ‘telling,’ so as to make the reader feel as if they are in the world created in their narrative, and try to use a broad range of effects in their work. The descriptive pieces were more successful when the candidate was able to structure the piece around more than one factor, not just the passing of time.

When preparing for **Section B: Writing for an audience**, candidates should be clear about the tone, register and format of magazine articles and print newspaper correspondence (as applicable), and should prepare various modes of discursive writing in the media. Developing appropriate skills in composition and rhetoric should continue to be the focus of preparatory exercises. The contrasting pieces were less successful when the candidates were unable to differentiate between the voices or points of view. Some candidates relied on exclamation marks and dashes rather than language to convey excitement or hesitancy. Compositions were more successful when the candidates had strong views themselves (e.g. age of leaving school) or were already well-versed in the arguments surrounding the topic at hand (e.g. global warming). Many excellent responses contained detailed arguments on either side of the debate. Others needed to develop more detailed, balanced, or thoroughly explained arguments in order to achieve higher marks.

There was frequent evidence of candidates referring to ‘amounts’ rather than ‘numbers’ of people, and the confusion of ‘less’ and ‘fewer’ occurred even in some of the more competent submissions. Some candidates needed to be more careful with syntax: they either created comma splices or ended sentences without main verbs. Incorrect apostrophe use was evident in some cases, but a more common error was the absence of punctuation. Some candidates seemed to neglect capitals at the beginning of sentences completely. Dangling modifiers were in evidence: candidates needed to remember the danger of beginning a sentence with ‘By ___ing’ formations, especially if participles were not related to the grammatical subject of the sentence. Candidates should also make sure that vocabulary is correctly deployed.

Across **Sections A** and **B** there was a range of technical and structural errors which often impacted on the clarity and accuracy of expression. It was the ability to avoid this tendency which marked the most successful responses.

Generally speaking, centres have prepared their candidates appropriately for this paper. Candidates seemed to enjoy writing **Section A**; in **Section B**, examiners saw a preparedness to argue both sides of the question with a degree of development.

In **Section A**, **Questions 1** was more popular than **2** and **3**. Candidates seemed more confident writing a narrative response than the descriptive piece asked for in **Question 3**. There was still a tendency to write stories in **Question 3**, when descriptive writing was required. Some who did write descriptive pieces needed to make sure not to load sentences and phrases with excessive and inappropriate adjectives. The stories for **Questions 1** and **2** were more successful when the candidates were able to make good decisions about how much information their readers needed to follow the plot. Structure and vocabulary were sometimes affected negatively when candidates employed flashbacks, dream sequences, and rambling asides in an attempt to 'fill the reader in'.

In **Section B**, **Question 4** was the most popular, followed by **Question 5**. **Question 4** was more successfully answered when candidates adopted an enthusiastic tone which appealed to older teenagers, in offering advice and guidance on how to survive away from family. Candidates who attempted **Question 6** need **not** write 'stage directions' for their TV documentary script for a voiceover; visual aspects of the documentary should be made apparent through the language of the voiceover. It is more important that they spend the time using language persuasively and convincingly. The more successful *Writing for an audience* answers kept the target audience in mind throughout and adopted language and structural techniques to match that audience. Less successful candidates needed to remember to use the conventions of different forms; to establish a mature, credible voice; or to develop a well thought out, logically organised line of argument. This was particularly true of some responses to **Question 5**, which asked for two speeches, and implied an inherently structured response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

This was the most popular question in **Section A**, and produced a wide range of openings to stories pertaining to the evocative title, 'Missing'. The idea of creating suspense and mystery was handled effectively by some candidates. A lot of the best answers were told from an omniscient point of view, thus enabling the writer to have more narrative control. Many good answers executed a cliffhanger ending to this 'opening to a story', providing the reader with plenty to think about. Among the less successful were those where the missing person was a first person narrator or where the 'chapter' ended with the person going missing. Some candidates mistakenly wrote the whole story, and once again some seemed to be adaptations of previously written material.

Less successful responses often only mentioned that the character was 'missing' in the final few lines. Many worthy attempts at realistic dialogue did not quite succeed in signalling characters' intentions or explaining their motives. This attempt was often obscured, in any case, when no new paragraphs were introduced to start a 'new speech', or quotation marks were either partially or wholly missing.

Question 2

The 'two contrasting pieces about a town' were not a particularly popular choice. There were quite a few examples of discursive rather than imaginative writing, sometimes accompanied by vocabulary from an inappropriately formal register. The fact that the question is in **Section A** means that imaginative writing is expected, and this clarification should be made with the candidates. More successful candidates answered this question well, with clearly contrasting perspectives. Some less successful versions attempted to use a first person narrative to reflect the rather unrealistic passing of 50 years in one viewpoint. Often the clichés of a pre-industrial age were opposed to a city mired in a present-day or futuristic environmental disaster, usually falling into a list of devastations after the collapse of a rather unreal utopia. Some candidates seemed unsure whether to treat this question to a narrative or descriptive approach, with somewhat confused results. Individually, either approach is fine, as long as the candidates use details and language effects to create a 'sense of place and atmosphere'. Sometimes the second half of these responses was much shorter than the first; and sometimes, this second part was not set later than the first. Candidates should remember to plan their responses to both parts equitably.

Question 3

The 'view from the window' produced some imaginative responses. The most successful candidates seemed to draw on their own experiences for this question, writing a clearly descriptive piece, rather than narrative. Some highly imaginative scenarios were observed, including describing views from a moving taxi – e.g. one that contrasted grey New York in the daytime with the lights of New York at night, or the feelings evoked of freedom and liberty as viewed through the bars of a prison cell window. Too many simply described general lovely countryside with birds chirping happily and lush green grass. Also, a number of less successful candidates provided answers that were mainly narrative, rather than descriptive. These answers generally attempted to attach labels of 'colours and light' to every object, thus desensitizing the reader's reaction to any possibility of descriptive contrast.

Question 4

This was the most popular question and produced a wide range of answers. The best candidates wrote in a suitably lively style and produced quite professional articles. Many wrote well-balanced and developed pieces which included practical advice and adopted an appropriately 'friendly' and often humorous tone. Most candidates were able to apply strategies to explain and offer advice to their readers in the appropriate form and tone. Stronger answers concentrated on the given topic of 'travelling' and focused their comments on connections to family and how best to combat the perceived 'homesickness' in positive ways – the general feeling was to promote good planning to prevent possible disasters, losses and so on. Effective responses often took on an informal tone without losing authority. However, some weaker candidates attempted a too-casual, over-friendly tone, often with comedic asides, which was not usually helpful. Less successful responses were repetitive on the subject of the importance of having the chance to travel or wrote only on ways to cope with being homesick.

Question 5

This question, about school leaving age, was also quite popular; it was generally handled well, with some very successful, persuasive answers which created differing attitudes and viewpoints effectively. Stronger answers focused on the practical application of time gained or lost, leading to possible careers; many also commented on the more social or psychological subtopics of gaining maturity and/or worldly experience. Some candidates clearly had more experience of debating than others and this was reflected in the standard of the work, while others wrote in less convincing styles. Less successful responses centred round the importance to a society of education and lost sight of the disadvantages and advantages of the different ages.

Question 6

This was a less popular question, and when attempted, candidates' work did not always demonstrate that it was a voiceover. The voiceovers for the documentary entitled 'Our Planet' often seemed more like a debating speech or a magazine article. Apart from a few examples in which reference was made at the beginning and end of the piece to a television programme there was almost no effort to relate what was being written to what might be appearing on screen. Candidates need to tie in the content with some visual elements of a television documentary, not merely writing an essay with a passionate argument or a quasi-speech exhorting young people to 'step up to the plate'. Others tried to insert 'directions' to indicate visual elements, only to make these as long as the text, which causes problems for examiners when calculating whether an answer infringes the rubric by brevity. There is no need to write 'stage directions'; candidates should instead write so as to reference the imagined visual components in the documentary.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/23
Writing

Key Messages

Candidates should focus on the instructions within each question – for example, concentrating on ‘suspense and drama’ for **Question 1** and ‘enthusiasm as well as caution’ for **Question 6**.

Time management skills are essential: overlong narratives in **Section A** often lead to short, underdeveloped answers for **Section B**.

Candidates should be prepared to spend a few minutes writing out a short plan to ensure the sound and effective structure of an answer. A lack of a plan often leads to diffuse, rambling work.

General Comments

In preparing for **Section A: Imaginative writing**, candidates should safeguard against the confusion of tense forms. If a candidate begins an imaginative writing task in the present tense, they should not switch randomly to the past tense. Candidates tend to produce more effective work when they do more ‘showing’ than ‘telling,’ and thus make the reader feel as if they are in the world created by the narrative or description. Candidates should also try to use a broad range of effects in their work. The descriptive pieces were more successful when the candidate was able to structure the piece around more than one factor.

When preparing for **Section B: Writing for an audience**, candidates should be clear about the tone, register and format of magazine articles and print newspaper correspondence (where available), and should prepare various modes of discursive writing in the media. Some appropriate skills in composition and rhetoric should continue to be the focus of exercises. The contrasting pieces were less successful when the candidates were unable to differentiate between the voices or points of view. Candidates should try to use language to convey excitement or hesitation, rather than relying on exclamation marks and dashes. They were more successful when the candidates had strong views themselves or were already well-versed in the arguments surrounding the topic at hand. Many excellent responses contained detailed arguments on either side of the debate. Others needed to develop thoroughly-explained and balanced arguments in order to achieve higher marks.

There was frequent evidence of candidates referring to ‘amounts’ rather than ‘numbers’ of people, and the confusion of ‘less’ and ‘fewer’ occurred even in some of the more competent submissions. Some candidates needed to be more careful with syntax: they either created comma splices or ended sentences without main verbs. Incorrect apostrophe use was evident in some cases, but a more common error was the absence of punctuation. Some candidates seemed to neglect capitals at the beginning of sentences completely. Dangling modifiers were in evidence: candidates needed to remember the danger of beginning a sentence with ‘By ___ing’ formations, especially if participles were not related to the grammatical subject of the sentence. Candidates should also make sure that vocabulary is correctly deployed.

Across **Sections A** and **B** there was a range of technical and structural errors which often impacted on the clarity and accuracy of expression. It was the ability to avoid this tendency which marked the most successful responses.

Generally speaking, centres have prepared their candidates appropriately for this paper. Candidates seemed to enjoy writing **Section A**; in **Section B**, examiners saw a preparedness to argue both sides of the question with a degree of development.

In **Section A**, **Questions 1** was more popular than **2** or **3**. Candidates seemed more confident writing a narrative response than the descriptive piece asked for in **Question 3**. There was still a tendency to write

stories in **Question 3**, when descriptive writing is required. Some who did write descriptive pieces needed to make sure not to load sentences and phrases with excessive and inappropriate adjectives. The stories for **Question 1** were more successful when the candidates were able to make good decisions about how much information their readers needed to follow the plot. Structure and vocabulary were sometimes affected negatively when candidates employed flashbacks, dream sequences, and rambling asides in an attempt to 'fill the reader in'.

In **Section B**, **Question 4** was the most popular, followed by **Question 5**. **Question 4** was more successfully answered when candidates adopted an enthusiastic tone which appealed to older teenagers, in offering advice about the nursing profession. Candidates who attempted **Question 6** need **not** write 'stage directions' for their TV documentary script for a voiceover; visual aspects of the documentary should be made apparent through the language of the voiceover. It is more important that they spend the time using language persuasively and convincingly. The more successful *Writing for an audience* answers kept the target audience in mind throughout and adopted language and structural techniques to match that audience. Less successful candidates needed to remember to use the conventions of different forms; to establish a mature, credible voice; or to develop a well thought out, logically organised line of argument. This was particularly true of some responses to **Question 5**, which asked for two speeches, and implied an inherently structured response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

This was the most popular choice of the three possible questions. Most candidates were able to fulfil the sense of 'suspense and drama'. A lot of the best answers were told from an omniscient point of view, thus enabling the writer to have more narrative control. The 'twist in the tail' element also involved some of the protagonists seeming as though they were trapped until the last moment. The stipulated 'ending of a story' could have been a tricky option, with the writer having to integrate a 'backstory' into a continued narrative, but this aspect was handled very well by a number of candidates, especially when they did not overburden the reader with the life-history of the endangered character. Less successful attempts at realistic dialogue did not quite succeed in signalling characters' intentions or explaining their motives. Such attempts were often obscured, in any case, when no new paragraphs were introduced to start a 'new speech', or when quotation marks were either partially or wholly missing.

Question 2

There were quite a few very good answers to this question, with some realistic 'grandmotherly' feelings, often deluded in supposing they had a closer or more loving relationship with the granddaughter than was the case and, as expected, the more able candidates had a sure understanding about what would motivate a younger person, the granddaughter, to possibly manipulate that relationship.

Question 3

Although candidates were invited to write a 'descriptive piece', some leeway was given to those who included (some) narrative elements, if enough descriptive contrast criteria were evident. The best writing for this was seen in some highly imaginative depictions of deep sea creatures, with their movements juxtaposed against the movement of the submarine. Less successful answers generally attempted to attach labels of 'sounds, space and movement' on every object, thus desensitizing the reader's reaction to any possibility of descriptive contrast. 'The Submarine' brought forth some bizarre examples of metaphorical language including a sandwich convention (as in 'sub') and the psychologically hidden 'deep' feelings of submerged (i.e. unrequited) passion. Even some attempts at realistic descriptions of claustrophobia encountered by submarine passengers and crew became an excuse for mawkish melodramatic narrative, rather than primarily description.

Question 4

The speech given by a nurse was often very effective and candidates generally spoke clearly about both the 'rewards' and 'challenges', sometimes with moving descriptions of patients either overcoming serious illness, or succumbing to fatal conditions. Treating relatives with respect was a common subtopic, usually handled with sensitivity. The challenges were not ignored by better candidates, however difficult it might first appear

to convince the audience that the job was still worthwhile. Less successful responses were repetitive, adopted too humorous a tone, or limited themselves to a description of a nurse's day without any real attempt to engage the audience.

Question 5

This was also a reasonably popular question and was generally handled well, with some very successful, persuasive answers creating differing attitudes and viewpoints effectively. The replies to the 'global warming' newspaper article were sometimes hampered by the fact that candidates seemed to have little to say when agreeing with the statement, presumably because it is a common experience for all students to be very well educated about the reality of global warming nowadays, hence this part of the answer was often too short or excessively repetitive. Stronger responses were able to marshal a number of cogent arguments against the statement.

Question 6

This was a slightly less popular question and, when attempted, candidates' work did not always demonstrate that it was a voiceover. Apart from a few examples in which reference was made at the beginning and end of the piece to a television programme there was little effort to relate what was being written to what might be appearing on screen. Candidates need to tie in the content with some visual elements of a television documentary. Some tried to insert 'directions' to indicate visual elements, only to make these as long as the text, which causes problems for examiners when calculating whether an answer infringes the rubric by brevity. There is no need to write 'stage directions'; candidates should instead write so as to reference the imagined visual components in the documentary.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/91
Poetry, Prose and Drama

Key messages:

- All literature questions ask candidates to consider ways in which writers express their ideas and treat their concerns, successful responses focus on authors' choices of language and literary techniques, considering the effects that these might have on a reader or audience.
- Essays which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary are not successful.
- Points in essays are made much more convincingly if supported by detailed references and quotations.
- Candidates should think carefully about the wording of the question they choose in order to select the most appropriate poems, stories or episodes from texts.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should discuss the use of language, form and structure of the extract in great detail. This is what is meant by the demand to 'comment closely'.

General comments

All the poetry and prose texts attracted a good number of answers, although some texts were more popular than others. Owen was much the preferred poet on the 33 variant, while *Songs of Ourselves* was preferred on 31 and 32. The prose was more mixed, with *Stories of Ourselves* the most popular text on the 31 variant, while this text shared a dominant position with *The Namesake* on the 32 variant. *The Namesake* was by far the most popular prose text on the 33 variant. On the drama, *A Man for All Seasons* was by far the most popular text across the world, with very few studying the Aidoo plays. Candidates have often responded very well to the dramatic techniques of Bolt's play as well as the issues it raises.

There does seem to have been an increase in candidates' confidence in attempting **(a)** questions. Although **(b)** answers still dominate, some texts on some variants attracted a comparatively high number of responses to **(a)** questions, with candidates in many cases choosing their references judiciously to construct their arguments. Where, on the novels, candidates wrote narrative accounts in response to these questions, they were much less successful.

Despite the continued popularity of the **(b)** passage-based question, many candidates do not deal with the wording to 'comment closely', in particular when answering on the prose texts. These questions are designed to give candidates the opportunity to examine the text in detail, which is why the passage is printed on the question paper. If only the content is explored it misses the focus of this type of question. Candidates should discuss aspects of the writing in the given extract; considering the impact of the writer's choices.

Comments on specific questions

Comments on this paper must be prefaced by the observation that they are based on a small number of candidates who took this variant.

Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems*

Question 1

- (a)** There were few answers to this question on Hughes' 'presentation of humankind' and they often illustrated the requirement for very careful choice of poems to respond to a specific stimulus. Candidates who concentrated exclusively on poems about animals found it difficult to achieve clear relevance, even when anthropomorphic readings were awkwardly imposed on the poems. The

poems which are directly about human beings proved more useful and candidates who focused their selection carefully were on much stronger ground.

- (b) The majority of candidates answered on '*Hawk Roosting*'. The most successful responses clearly focused on the ways in which Hughes presents the hawk and offered personal and detailed analyses of structure, form and language to do this. Less cogent answers tended to discuss what the poem might mean using personal assertion which was not always fully supported.

Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

Question 2

- (a) A small number of candidates responded to this question. Candidates appear to lack confidence in discussing those poems of Owen's which are not about the First World War, though the selection features several which have a wider range of subject matter. Candidates who were able to discuss that wider range, including '*On My Songs*', '*Storm*', '*Music*', '*To Eros*', '*Maundy Thursday*', '*Song of Songs*' and '*Shadwell Stair*', each of which featured in answers, were able to respond relevantly to this question, discussing Owen's treatment of art, inspiration, love, passion, and religious faith.
- (b) Candidates' frequently exclusive focus on Owen's war poetry led to some one-sided readings of '*The Unreturning*', while it is possible to read the poem as one about dead soldiers, and Examiners gave credit to well-argued and supported readings; such an approach naturally limited the more philosophical considerations of the poem as it deals with death, the after-life and the 'smothering wing' of didactic Christianity. There were some well-informed answers, the most confident of which were able to identify many of the ways in which the pessimistic mood is created and were able to offer detailed and personal analyses of them.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 3

- (a) There were some interesting interpretations of how nature might be interpreted, the most common and successful of which was by looking at the natural world and the way it can be seen to reflect humanity. Candidates chose a very wide range of poems, some of the most successful being Spenser's '*Sonnet 75*', Sidney's '*Sonnet 31*', Wroth's '*Sonnet 19*', Raleigh's '*Walsingham*', Shakespeare's '*Sonnet 18*', Waller's '*Go, Lovely Rose*' and Spenser's '*The Procession of the Seasons*'. Strong answers made use of detailed knowledge of the chosen poems to allow successful integration of quotations and references in a sustained argument. In these answers, apposite textual references were used to explore ways in which imagery and symbolism contribute to the meaning and effects of the poems. This latter point is important, as feature-spotting without reference to meaning does not support a strong analysis of a text. Even when the question has a stylistic focus, crafting a cogent essay is more fluently attained if a view and interpretation of the poems' meaning drives the argument.
- (b) Drayton's sonnet was a very popular option, though many candidates did not grasp its ironies and the poet's use of the final couplet. Many did not reference to the sonnet form and how Drayton uses it to develop the ideas of the poem. An interpretation that the poem expresses anger after the breakdown of a relationship was present in many essays, thus missing the mood and tone of the language. More successful responses recognised the tone of the octave, noting a weary resignation, with some productive comment on the reinforcement through repetition in 'glad, yea, glad' and the sweeping finality of 'no more', 'cleanly', 'for ever' and 'all our vows'. Some subtle answers noted that the apparent finality of 'Shake hands forever' is undermined by the run on sentences that lead into an imagined later meeting. Such essays, which often went on to discuss the personification of dying 'Passion' and grieving 'Faith' in the third quatrain, were able to comment on the final couplet's twist and the sudden re-emergence of a flicker of hope. Alert candidates were then able to see the whole poem as a device, self-dramatising and pleading, to maintain a relationship rather than to lament a failed one.

Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

Question 4

- (a) Candidates attempting this question saw Ashima's and Ashoke's relationship as the cornerstone of Lahiri's novel and noted that they represent the most stable relationship in the novel despite the lack of obvious intimacy. Less effective answers were narrative in style, recounting the relationship from its arrangement in India, through emigration to America, the birth of children and Ashoke's death. Such answers showed knowledge of the novel but were unable to develop convincing understanding of Lahiri's methods of presentation, which were at the heart of the question. More successful responses were able to consider the structure of the narrative, writing about the contrasts between different couples in the text. They specifically compared Ashima and Ashoke with American couples' greater manifestation of public affection and with Gogol's different relationships. Answers were often informed by useful awareness of ways in which cultural differences between India and America, and the differing ways Ashima and Ashoke respond to them, have an impact on their relationship. The roles of their children and Ashima's response to Ashoke's death were often seen as pivotal in the narrative.
- (b) This was a popular passage and candidates were well aware of its significance in the text, ultimately providing the impetus for Ashoke's emigration and new life in America. Fewer responses balanced that wider awareness with an examination of the detail of the writing of the passage, which is rich in sensory detail. Candidates should remember that the prime purpose of the (b) question is to provide a close analytical response to the writing of the passage. From the early isolation ('Immersed', 'lost' and 'unaware') at the opening through horrific details ('whispering hoarsely for help', 'Blood drenched', 'mangled limbs', and 'broken his pelvis'), to the detached reporting ('Holiday-Makers' Tryst with Death'), there was a great deal in the passage to repay careful reading and close commentary.

Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

Question 5

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question, which offered an opportunity to comment closely on the physical descriptions of Simon Rosedale and the nature of his dialogue with Lily. Most noted his ostentation with 'gold cigarette-case' and 'gold-tipped cigarette' between his 'plump jewelled fingers' and there was very occasional comment on a racial caricature. Most answers noted the clash between Rosedale and Lily, but responses which lapsed into summary of their dialogue, rather than looking at Rosedale's language and phrasing, were not successful.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 6

- (a) This question repaid careful choice of which two stories to compare, with candidates who had thought carefully about different kinds of final twists, and their effects on the reader, doing well. '*Meteor*' featured in many answers, candidates often writing effectively about the final human perspective, thoughtlessly killing the 'vicious little brutes' after the reader has gained a far fuller understanding of the ideals and technological advancement of Onn's species, through his own journal entries. Different kinds of shifts in perspective were noted at the end of '*The Village Saint*', with the village's re-evaluation of Mma-Mompatati, and of '*Games at Twilight*', with Ravi's victory turning to 'insignificance'. '*An Englishman's Home*', '*The Signalman*' and '*The Yellow Wall Paper*' were also stories discussed with success. While less confident responses relied on narrative to lead up to the ending, more assured work showed how the structural device is either subtly prepared for or comes as a surprise, and how that changes the reader's view of the story or characters as the end of the story is reached.
- (b) This was a very popular passage, with success dependent on a sustained focus on 'hopes and fears' and close commentary of Desai's writing. The strongest answers discussed ways in which the hopes and fears are connected and how Ravi's imagined, abstract sense of 'so much victory' and sensations 'he had never known' enables him to face the highly tangible fears in the shed. Much was made of the sensory language, considering how Desai makes Ravi's experience vivid

for the reader by using visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile imagery. While there was some thoughtful comment on the rich imagery of this passage, candidates were often less observant of the effects of the skilful syntax and sentence structure. A number of candidates offered a 'colonial' allegorical reading, but it was seldom convincing and often caused digression from close focus on the passage.

Ama Ata Aidoo: *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa*

Question 7

- (a) The relationship between Esi and Ato characters was clearly understood in the few answers to this question, as was Aidoo's purpose in depicting them. However, candidates were more reluctant to discuss her dramatic methods, resulting in narrative essays, as candidates illustrated the tension in the relationship.
- (b) In the very few responses seen, candidates found something to say about marriage, but found it much more challenging to discuss Aidoo's presentation of it in the extract from *Anowa*. The setting, stage directions and actions, the structure and phrasing of the dialogue were all worthy of comment here but these opportunities were seldom taken.

William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 8

- (a) The distinction between Egypt and Rome was clearly understood, as was Cleopatra's role as the representative of Egypt, though many candidates did not look closely enough at the wording of the question and opted for what seemed to be pre-prepared Egypt versus Rome essays. This meant that answers often lacked focused discussion of Shakespeare's methods of presenting Egypt and its attractions, the core of the task. More successful responses considered the characterisation of Cleopatra and her court, their subjects of discussion with a focus on pleasure, consumption and sexuality. It was also sometimes noted that the Alexandrian court is dominantly feminine and therefore potentially alluring to a man such as Antony. Strong answers also considered other characters' responses to Egypt as one of Shakespeare's methods of portraying its pleasures and were thus able to explore the ambiguities of the presentation by looking in particular at Antony, Enobarbus and Caesar.
- (b) Although Antony does not appear in the passage, candidates usually found plenty of material to discuss Caesar's attitude to him. There was some useful analysis of the characterisation of Octavia and her relationship with Antony to inform the answer, and indeed of the structure of the extract – while less confident candidates tended not to go beyond line 46, strong responses were alert to the passage's suggestions right to its final line. Good answers noted that Caesar's hyperbolic description of how his sister should have arrived in Rome is used to denigrate Antony, commenting too on his disparaging descriptions of Cleopatra later in the extract. The list of kings was also seen as significant, constructing a case that Antony is a military threat to Rome. Further suggestions of Antony's negligence are made by terming Octavia 'abus'd' and offering her 'Best of comfort' because her husband does not. Maecenas, of course, echoes his leader's comments. In the course of this discussion, some noted how Octavia is used as a pawn for Caesar to manipulate Antony, observing that she has little identity of her own in the passage, being only 'Caesar's sister' or 'The wife of Antony'.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 9

- (a) Most candidates answering tackling this question were aware of the play's historical context and its tension between church and state, created by More's refusal to sign the Act of Supremacy. However, many were happier describing the play's action rather than discussing how Bolt uses his drama to present that confrontation. More confident responses were able to show clearly how some dramatic effects highlighted the confrontation. Examples used were the Common Man, Bolt's stage setting and stage directions, the language of the dialogue, as well as characterisation. Some of the careful legalistic tussles between More and Cromwell provided helpful material, as did the development of Rich and the foil to More created by his wife Alice.

- (b) While many responses to this question focused on More and Roper and ignored the Common Man, strong responses recognised how vital this character is to Bolt's presentation of More. His comments on change and reading from the history book with its blandly superior tone declaiming about the 'unhappy few' who 'set themselves against the current of their times' and acknowledgement of 'Imprisonment' and 'torture' are a preface to the audience's viewing the human face of those who 'court disaster' as the '*Lights rise to show MORE*'. Less successful answers did not focus on these details of the writing of the passage, instead limiting themselves to a description of the conversation between Roper and More. However, strong answers were alert to Bolt's stage directions throughout the passage and the importance of props and costume – from Roper's wearing 'black' and a 'cross' to More's 'chain of office'. All of these details create the impact of More on stage for the audience and highlight his complex character, at times provocative, thoughtful, humorous, concerned and at all times a firm believer in the power of the law to protect him.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/92
Poetry, Prose and Drama

Key messages:

- All literature questions ask candidates to consider ways in which writers express their ideas and treat their concerns, which means that successful responses focus on authors' choices of language and literary techniques, considering the effects that these might have on a reader or audience.
- Essays which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary are not successful.
- Points in essays are made much more convincingly if supported by detailed references and quotations.
- Candidates should think carefully about the wording of the question they choose in order to select the most appropriate poems, stories or episodes from texts.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should discuss the use of language, form and structure of the extract in great detail. This is what is meant by the demand to 'comment closely'.

General comments

All the poetry and prose texts attracted a good number of answers, although some texts were more popular than others. Owen was much the preferred poet on the 33 variant, while *Songs of Ourselves* was preferred on 31 and 32. The prose was more mixed, with *Stories of Ourselves* the most popular text on the 31 variant, while this text shared a dominant position with *The Namesake* on the 32 variant. *The Namesake* was by far the most popular prose text on the 33 variant. On the drama, *A Man for All Seasons* was by far the most popular text across the world, with very few studying the Aidoo plays. Candidates have often responded very well to the dramatic techniques of Bolt's play as well as the issues it raises.

There does seem to have been an increase in candidates' confidence in attempting **(a)** questions. Although **(b)** answers still dominate, some texts on some variants attracted a comparatively high number of responses to **(a)** questions, with candidates in many cases choosing their references judiciously to construct their arguments. Where, on the novels, candidates wrote narrative accounts in response to these questions, they were much less successful.

Despite the continued popularity of the **(b)** passage-based question, many candidates do not deal with the wording to 'comment closely', in particular when answering on the prose texts. These questions are designed to give candidates the opportunity to examine the text in detail, which is why the passage is printed on the question paper. If only the content is explored it misses the focus of this type of question. Candidates should discuss aspects of the writing in the given extract; considering the impact of the writer's choices.

Comments on specific questions

Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems*

Question 1

- (a)** There were very few responses to this question, perhaps reflecting candidates' lack of confidence in dealing with Hughes poems where animals are not the subject matter. Indeed, despite the question's clear focus on the presentation of men, many of the answers focused on animal poems. While a careful use of a poem such as '*Thrushes*' could be relevant to this question, it needs a careful approach, which was missing in a large number of the essays. In a number of cases, candidates asserted that animals in poems represented human beings, without any textual

evidence to support these views. Candidates who wrote about human brutality in warfare in '*Bayonet Charge*', or the loss and grief caused by war in '*Six Young Men*', avoided such problems and were able to address the question directly and successfully. There were also very interesting essays which discussed human creativity in '*The Thought Fox*', children and parental relationships in '*Full Moon and Little Frieda*', the unexpected humour and optimism in the presentation of the men in '*Football at Slack*' and some which made the question gender specific in robust discussions of marital relationships in '*Her Husband*'.

- (b) '*Thrushes*' was a very popular option and the initial word 'Terrifying' was picked up in nearly every essay. Successful responses noted that this was an unusual and surprising perspective on a small garden bird ('on the lawn'); those who viewed the thrush as a ferocious predator missed part of the impact of the poem. The surprising number of candidates who thought that thrushes were plants missed even more, and led to some curious readings of 'Dark, deadly eye' and 'delicate legs'. Better informed answers saw the thrush transformed by Hughes' verse into a deadly machine, picking up on the mechanical and military imagery of 'steel' and 'bullet'. The question asked about the development of Hughes' response, so answers which did not move far beyond such descriptions of the birds were partial in their treatment of the question, though the second and third stanzas were found much more challenging than the first. Less confident responses skirted around this section of the poem, but strong answers noted the connections Hughes makes between the 'genius' of the 'streamlined' efficiency of a predator and Mozart, and the contrast between that and the rest of humanity's vanity, indolence and self-absorption. Where these ideas were linked with discussion of the techniques Hughes uses to communicate them, particularly sentence length, rhythm and caesura, essays were very strong indeed.

Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

Question 2

- (a) This was quite a popular question however; there was often a disappointing lack of focus on setting. Too often, candidates stated that the setting was the battlefield and proceeded to write standard essays on two war poems without particular regard to setting. Handled carefully, though, with well-chosen poems, the focus of war could be very successful. Although it did not appear often, '*Spring Offensive*' gave candidates much useful material to deal with, as it is a poem largely concerned with the landscape and the weather as the soldiers prepare for attack. There was good work on '*Anthem for Doomed Youth*', showing how Owen creates the battlefield through auditory, tactile and visual imagery. When setting was seen as a particular occasion as well as a place, candidates discussed poems like '*The Sentry*' and '*Inspection*' effectively, while post-war medical facilities were often thoughtfully in focus when candidates wrote about '*Mental Cases*' and '*Disabled*', though the close concern with the soldiers themselves in these poems made them more difficult to use successfully. Some of the strongest responses ignored the war poems altogether, producing some very interesting work on the religious concerns of '*Maundy Thursday*' and, in particular, on '*Shadwell Stair*', where biographical context of Owen's homosexuality was often thoughtfully used.
- (b) '*Disabled*' was a very popular option, and while there were some general and descriptive answers, many candidates were able to write thoughtful and detailed commentaries. A distinguishing feature of very good, rather than competent, responses was being the ability to comment on aspects of Owen's presentation such as the third person perspective, the anonymity of the soldier, the reported thought in stanzas 4, 5 and 7 and the effects of the shifts in perspective. There were some effective discussions of the structure of the poem with its contrast between the soldier's present and past states, while many candidates commented on the imagery of blood, the use of colour, the images of emasculation and the mournful closing questions. Some very careful responses noted Owen's references to body parts throughout the poem – elbow, knees, face, thigh, leg, shoulder – and commented that in the final stanza only his 'soul' is left. While candidates often observe a rhyme scheme without commenting on its use or effects, with this poem a number of candidates were able to note how it works with the development of the poem, exploring the ways in which stanzas pick up rhymes from previous stanzas.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 3

- (a) Candidates tackling this question were usually able to identify two sonnets successfully and were usually able to give an account of their meaning. The question, though, was on the poets' use of the form, and even when candidates were able to use terms such as Elizabethan, Spenserian, Petrarchan, octave, sestet, couplet, volta and so on, there was overall a lack of confidence in engaging with how those features had been exploited by the writers in order to communicate their concerns effectively. All of the sonnets in the selection appeared in answers, the most popular being Drayton's, Spenser's, Shakespeare's and Wroth's. The strongest responses not only knew the conventions of the sonnet form but were able to show how they worked, discussing, for example, how the three quatrains in Spenser's '*Sonnet 75*' swap the perspective between the man and the woman before the final couplet clinches the poet's argument, or how the final couplet of Drayton's '*Sonnet 61*' creates a revaluation of the whole poem's mood and intention. Candidates who were alert to the final couplet of Shakespearean sonnets were also able to note the neatness of the conclusions to his two sonnets in the collection, after the development of the ideas through the quatrains.
- (b) This was by far the most frequently attempted question on the paper and produced a very wide range of responses. There were a number of errors including: some candidates believing that the poem is an Elizabethan sonnet, others unable to identify a rose, misreading 'deserts' for 'desserts', misunderstanding of 'Suffer' in line 14, or arguing that the poem expresses hatred and anger. There were also a large number of paraphrases of the poem, with inaccuracies showing insecure understanding. On the other hand, there were many vigorous, articulate and detailed essays, some of which took a fiercely feminist view of Waller's poem and the imperative demands the male speaker makes of the woman, who is objectified and valued only for her 'graces' and 'beauty'. The most successful recognised that the rose in the poem is both an emissary to the woman and a representative of her, being sent to bear the lover's messages but also being 'wondrous sweet and fair' like the lady. They also noted that the argument gathers urgency as the poem progresses, accentuating time, until the harsh 'Then die!' which begins the final stanza. These ideas fitted with the *carpe diem* reading of the poem and strong responses observed the poem's tensions between male desire, female coyness and unrelenting mortality in an alternatively emotionally involved and detached treatise on feminine appearance.

Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

Question 4

- (a) The significance of the train crash was widely understood and more confident candidates paid attention to the question's focus on the development of Ashoke's characterisation. Candidates who overlooked this prompt tended to rely on narrative summary of events following the crash and therefore did not write successful essays. Focused responses argued that Ashoke is shown to be better at adapting to American life than Ashima because he understands from the crash how important it is to seize life's chances. Some candidates tackled Ashoke's belief that the whole family unit 'came out from Gogol's overcoat' and his lifelong amazement at this miracle which means he strives continually to record the moment and convey its significance to Gogol. This led them to the issues of naming and cultural identity which lie at the heart of the novel. Some thoughtful and sensitive answers suggested that in many ways Lahiri presents Ashoke as the quiet hero of the novel who is only fully appreciated by Gogol in particular after his death. Other candidates also considered the importance of trains and travel to the novel as a whole, though this was only fully successful when linked to Ashoke's characterisation.
- (b) Candidates had no difficulty in engaging with the passage about Gogol's first experience of school and often wrote with thoughtful sensitivity. There was some assertion that Mrs Lapidus is domineering and culturally insensitive, though this overlooked the subtlety of Lahiri's portrayal of the misunderstandings between her and Ashoke. The concerns with Gogol's insecurity, the clash of cultural values and foreshadowings of later events were best made when closely linked to the detail of the passage. In this way candidates were able to comment well on Gogol's silence while he 'looks down at his sneakers', on Ashoke's 'careful, accented English', the different pronunciation of Nikhil and on Gogol gripping the pencil 'tightly'. There was some interesting discussion of different Bengali and American attitudes to children, comparing Ashoke's imperatives and decisiveness ('Don't...', 'No tears...' and 'he will grow accustomed...') with Mrs Lapidus' choices ('are you

happy...’, ‘do you want?’), making the point that this is the first time Gogol is able to make choices. Some noted that this choice illustrates to Gogol that his parents are different and are treated differently, with their wishes easily overruled in America. Many were able to comment on the irony of his rejection of the name Nikhil at this point, which becomes his choice later in the novel, and that this is one of the important moments concerning name and identity in the text. A few commented on the appropriateness of his rejection of the name at this point, as Nikhil means ‘complete’.

Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

Question 5

- (a) Limited responses to this question were often restricted to a character summary of Simon Rosedale, focusing on his social ambitions, while more successful candidates used Rosedale as a springboard into discussion of social ambition in the novel as a whole, as the wording indicated. An informed knowledge of the text, enabling selection of key references, was also a feature of strong responses. Candidates with good knowledge of secondary characters did well, with several precise examples to pinpoint who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ and who hovers in the middle. The Welly Brys and Mattie Gormer were used to good effect. The best answers blended an overview of social ambition in the novel with discussion of how Wharton shows what is lost emotionally and spiritually when social status is gained, exemplified by the number of characters who fail to have a successful marriage. There was useful discussion of Gerty Farish as a foil character, used by Wharton to suggest that morality and social success are incompatible. Those who used the cue quotation to shape their responses often successfully noted that Rosedale’s forthright manner contrasts with the hypocrisy of the old money families. Some candidates commented that his brashness is initially unattractive to the reader, but his honesty is more valued as the novel progresses.
- (b) Verbally and syntactically dense, many candidates found this a challenging passage and sometimes struggled to render its meaning effectively. Confusion about the identity of the ‘dangerous lunatic’ in line 11 was relatively frequent – some thought the phrase describes how Selden is moving. There were, though, many astute and observant answers, noting the ‘change’ in Selden once he sees Lily; most noted that he sidesteps real human contact to do what he usually does, which is to avoid action by retreating into his own thoughts. Though ‘behaviour’ was often not covered as well as ‘thoughts’, where candidates did pay attention to this part of the question, there were good points about Selden’s ‘mechanical’ movements and his ‘dropping’ down into a seat. Candidates often responded with frustration to Selden and demonstrated thoughtful understanding of Wharton’s language choices. His lawyer’s vocabulary was detected in the ‘burden of offence’, the ‘countercharges’ and the ‘original grievance’, together with the point that this is how he avoids intimacy. Many picked up on the Christian diction of his Pilate-like ‘wash[ing] of hands’ and his exclusion from ‘free communion’ as another sign of his failure to connect. While Selden’s thoughts regarding Dorset were not always successfully discussed, there were good comments on his thoughts about Bertha and the danger she represents. Comment on ‘last round of powder’ and ‘defensive missile’ rounded off the responses well, often with the coy observation that he knows her extremely well.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 6

- (a) The choice of views or values in the question gave candidates a very wide choice of stories to choose from, so many of the stories in the selection featured in answers. As ever, a key discriminator was the degree of detailed textual knowledge, with some candidates relying on generalised narrative, while others were able to make precise references and support their arguments with quotations from their chosen stories. Success often depended too on the clash of values being clearly defined to enable a focused discussion of the stories. This meant that ‘*Meteor*’ was often a very successful choice, enabling candidates to explore not only the different world views of the human beings and the tiny aliens but also Wyndham’s narrative method, which places those different views side by side as he switches between third person narrative and Onn’s journal. Discussions of Grace’s ‘*Journey*’ were also often successful, looking at different attitudes to land ownership between the Maori and Pakeha points of view, especially if that discussion was focused on the exchange of dialogue in the real estate office. ‘*The Lemon Orchard*’ featured frequently; with candidates noting that the physical clash is on the verge of extreme violence, a clash between not only race in the Apartheid regime, but between educated and uneducated. It is a clash that la Guma

portrays through physical descriptions of threat but also through demeaning racist terminology in the dialogue. Other stories successfully employed included '*Games at Twilight*', '*The Yellow Wall Paper*', '*The Village Saint*' and '*Secrets*'.

- (b) Candidates engaged very well with this extremely popular extract, often seeing the narrator's final escape from the oppressions of patriarchy at the end. Candidates in the higher mark ranges offered more subtle readings, alert to ambiguities and irony. By acknowledging the narrator's gnawing of the bedstead and her exclamatory exaggerated style, many better candidates noticed that the striking ending demonstrates both the narrator's mania and her escape and therefore can be inferred as ironic and pitiful. Strong answers demonstrated a clear awareness of how the story has built up to this point in the narrative and had a clear sense of the narrator's confinement and escape, enabling them to comment on the passage's effectiveness as an ending. Successful answers paid attention to the use of first person narrative, the use of short or fragmentary sentences and paragraphs and the increasingly assertive and violent statements and exclamations. In such a way they were able to acknowledge the reader's discovery that the narrator has been gnawing the bedstead and that the mark on the wall is from her constant circling, so that the reader is able to make detached judgments of her irrational behaviour through her own narration. There was also appreciation of the melding of the narrator and the woman in the wallpaper, the wild descriptions of 'strangled heads and bulbous eyes', the demeaning 'young man' and 'John, dear' and the black humour of having to 'creep over him every time'.

Ama Ata Aidoo: *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa*

Question 7

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.

William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 8

- (a) Strong answers to this question used the question's prompt 'To what extent' to shape an argument and come to a conclusion, often considering not only whether Antony can be considered a 'fool' but also how far Cleopatra is a 'strumpet'. Candidates looked at Roman and Egyptian views of Antony and explored clashes of duty and love. Such discussions were successful if they were supported by specific references to action and by quotations, the latter being important as so many of the views in this play are couched in its language and interpretations of it. Candidates' final judgements varied widely, showing strong levels of personal response.
- (b) Candidates did not always respond well to this military scene, but it rewarded candidates who were aware of the context and looked closely at how the pre-battle negotiations are handled, often noting that it is Antony who is able to seal the peace. Strong answers noted the military opening with '*drum and trumpet*' and '*Soldiers marching*' with opposing forces arrayed against each other on the stage. Within this context there are formal speeches, with particularly rhetorical flourishes from Pompey as he recounts the historical context of their division with reference to Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius. He speaks of political ideals in elevated language, while Caesar is crisp and demeaning, referring to Pompey's 'discontented sword'. However, as good answers noted, the parley descends into personal claims about houses and personal debt for family protection before ending in resolution, 'liberal thanks' and 'composition'. Some alert candidates noted the weak role played by Lepidus, who has barely three complete lines in the extract, despite being one of the three 'senators... of this great world'.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 9

- (a) This question was the less popular on this text. However, those who did choose to write in response to this question were usually knowledgeable about the play and Alice's role in it. The most successful saw her as a loving, faithful wife but noted her lack of religious idealism and more practical views make her a foil to her husband. Though she lacks Thomas More's learning, she is

insightful enough to recognise that his view that the law will always protect him is flawed and she shows her value in the comforts of life by her bitterness at their loss of social position. Candidates appreciated that, nevertheless, she stands by More as he prepares for his death.

- (b)** Most candidates answering this question were led by the wording to look at the way the dramatic action in the extract and the play overall would be viewed by the audience, which greatly helped their answers. Essays frequently featured competent analyses of the dynamic between the Steward and those characters requiring information from him, with appreciation of the humour. Candidates commented on the significance of the stage directions at the beginning of the extract, followed by the audience reaction to the Steward's oversize cross, the money interactions and the Steward's final monologue. Thoughtful responses looked at the contrast between the two encounters, while the comedy of the Steward's behaviour was effectively analysed, candidates noting that the humour ironically undercuts the growing sense of the danger of More's position.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/93
Poetry, Prose and Drama

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- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should discuss the use of language, form and structure of the extract in great detail. This is what is meant by the demand to 'comment closely'.

General comments

All the poetry and prose texts attracted a good number of answers, although some texts were more popular than others. Owen was much the preferred poet on the 33 variant, while *Songs of Ourselves* was preferred on 31 and 32. The prose was more mixed, with *Stories of Ourselves* the most popular text on the 31 variant, while this text shared a dominant position with *The Namesake* on the 32 variant. *The Namesake* was by far the most popular prose text on the 33 variant. On the drama, *A Man for All Seasons* was by far the most popular text across the world, with very few studying the Aidoo plays. Candidates have often responded very well to the dramatic techniques of Bolt's play as well as the issues it raises.

There does seem to have been an increase in candidates' confidence in attempting **(a)** questions. Although **(b)** answers still dominate, some texts on some variants attracted a comparatively high number of responses to **(a)** questions, with candidates in many cases choosing their references judiciously to construct their arguments. Where, on the novels, candidates wrote narrative accounts in response to these questions, they were much less successful.

Despite the continued popularity of the **(b)** passage-based question, many candidates do not deal with the wording to 'comment closely', in particular when answering on the prose texts. These questions are designed to give candidates the opportunity to examine the text in detail, which is why the passage is printed on the question paper. If only the content is explored it misses the focus of this type of question. Candidates should discuss aspects of the writing in the given extract; considering the impact of the writer's choices.

Comments on specific questions

Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems*

Question 1

- (a)** In many cases, candidates seemed to ignore the wording of this question and wrote essays on two poems about animals. Some imposed metaphoric readings on animal poems, arguing that '*Hawk Roosting*', for example, is really about human beings rather than a hawk. Neither approach was successful – it is vital that candidates carefully consider the implications of the wording of the questions. More successful answers sometimes looked at those poems where Hughes makes connections or comparisons between the animal and human worlds, considering, for example, '*Thrushes*', '*A March Calf*' or '*View of a Pig*'. Humanity's place within the natural world in '*Wind*' was sometimes discussed effectively, though often the most successful answers were those by

candidates who looked squarely at 'the presentation of human beings'. Leaning just enough on biographical context, there were some excellent essays on 'You Hated Spain' and 'The Tender Place', while others looked at the war poems 'Bayonet Charge' and 'Six Young Men', considering their differing perspectives. Other poems discussed interestingly were 'The Thought-Fox', 'Her Husband', 'Full Moon and Little Frieda' and 'Meeting'.

- (b) This extract from 'Skylarks' was not widely attempted. On the whole, answers suggested that candidates were not very confident with this poem, hampered in many cases by uncertainty about what a lark is. While all identified it as a bird, those who viewed the lark as a vicious blood-thirsty predator were wide of the mark and misinterpreted the lines 'Crueller than owl or eagle' and 'Obedient as to death a dead thing.' Stronger responses were able to discuss the lark as a bird driven by instinct to fly high and sing and identified some of the ways in which Hughes uses the unusual form of the poem to communicate these ideas. Some commented that the long, arrow-like shape of line 6 is followed by a short dense stanza of truncated lines, imitating the packed muscle of the bird's chest. The subsequent repetition of the adjective 'leaden' is used both to suggest the power of that muscle but also the difficulty in pulling against the downward force of gravity. Some candidates observed that lines 22–24 create a visual impression of the climbing lark, getting smaller with perspective, while line 25 uses the word 'Obedient', expressing its powerlessness to do anything else. The occasional sharp answer noted that the repetition of 'O lark' in the third section suggests the bird's repeated 'gaspings', the song is presented as being both desperate through 'gape', 'gaspings' and 'Rip in and out' and Romantic- 'a breaker of ocean milling the shingle' - brought together in the paradoxical 'Joy! Help! Joy! Help!' at the end of the extract.

Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

Question 2

- (a) As with the Hughes (a) question, this was another where many candidates wrote what they had pre-prepared rather than responding to the specific prompt of the question. Examiners saw, therefore, many essays on the presentation of war with little consideration of the viewpoints. Others glanced at the question by stating that Owen's point of view is that war is terrible and proceeded with a generic essay. While Examiners gave as much credit as they could, the higher level of marks was reserved for those candidates who read the question carefully and responded appropriately, choosing their poems carefully to ensure a relevant, focused discussion. Some excellent answers went straight to poems such as 'Inspection' and looked at the way Owen skilfully creates different voices in his poetry and the way those voices and the views they express might conflict. Some striking responses discussed 'The Last Laugh', considering the way the poem gives viewpoints to the weaponry itself. Other poems successfully used in this way were 'The Letter' and 'The Dead-Beat'. While candidates who argued that poems written at different times showed Owen's changing view of the war, these often hit the problem of assuming that Owen's point of view is expressed directly by the poem's speaker in all cases. 'Disabled', for example, was frequently used, often with little recognition that the disabled soldier is not the narrator creating awkward readings of the viewpoints in the poem and how Owen presents them.
- (b) Despite the question's very clear focus on 'miners and coal mining', many candidates discussed 'Miners' purely as a war poem, which was limiting. Others, however, were well informed about the context of the poem's composition and used that information sensibly to guide their response. Strong answers looked closely at the creation of a gentle mood as coal burns in the 'hearth' at the beginning of the poem and the reflection on the ancientness of coal itself, composed of prehistoric compressed 'leaves/And smothered ferns' before the shift to a different kind of vocabulary and mood after stanza 4. Confident candidates understood Owen's eventual linking of the experiences of miners and soldiers sacrificing their lives in different 'dark pits', the strongest answers explaining how the imagery associated both with miners and soldiers is developed in stanzas 4–6. This often led to recognition of ways in which the final two stanzas suggest the ignorance of those who benefit from mining and war as they 'sit soft-chaired'; some also noted the difference between these two worlds and that the voice of the poem identifies himself with the miners and soldiers in the final lines.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 3

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There was not a large number of responses on Wyatt's poem and a significant proportion of those did not tackle it with confidence. Discussions of it often lacked detail and were simplistic in interpretation, overlooking the poem's development and ambiguity. Stronger answers not only showed a knowledge and understanding of the poem, but were also able to comment on Wyatt's language and the three stanza structure of the poem which controls the development of the ideas. The predatory language of the first stanza was noted by several candidates and a few picked up the paradox between the women who are both 'stalking' and 'gentle, tame and meek'. The change to 'wild', 'range' and 'Busily seeking' was quite widely noted, however, before the second stanza's focus on one 'special' occasion. There was some discussion of promiscuity and some candidates picked up the subtle eroticism of the stanza, reinforced by the sibilance. Some noted how this stanza's dreamlike tone is certified as real at the beginning of the third stanza, though few noted how that assertion is emphasised by the meter. Candidates were more confident with the tone of disillusion and bitterness with which the poem ends.

Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

Question 4

- (a) While there was certainly a number of narrative essays which rehearsed a character summary of Ashima, there were many which successfully used the cue quotation as a prompt to discuss the development of her role through the novel. There was appropriate focus on her role as the preserver of tradition, the link to Calcutta and embodiment of absolute loyalty to marriage and family. Her role as creator of a new extended family of Bengali ex-pats was noted and that, as she makes America 'home', she becomes a source of help to more recent newcomers. There were some interesting comments on her associations with recurring motifs, such as food and the telephone, representing key cultural links and communication between members of the Ganguli family.
- (b) The party passage attracted an enormous number of responses and in nearly every case, candidates answered with enthusiasm and sensitivity. There were some exceptions, including those who mistakenly argued that the central character rejects the name 'Gogol' because it is Indian, and adopts the name 'Nikhil' because it is American. This is a crucial misunderstanding. However, there were many careful and detailed readings of the passage, examining ways in which Lahiri presents Gogol's social awkwardness, the characteristic American qualities of Kim and the exploration of Gogol's thought processes as he pauses before introducing himself as Nikhil. The section narrating his introducing himself to Kim and her response was often very carefully and successfully analysed, with its interplay of dialogue, thoughts and physical responses. Many noted the new freedoms which changing his name gives Gogol, of which both he ('protected by an invisible shield') and his friends ('I can't believe you kissed her, Gogol') are conscious. Good answers contextualised this moment in the novel within its concerns with naming and identity, noting that this is the moment he separates himself from his childhood identity and that he later formalises his switch to Nikhil.

Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

Question 5

- (a) The question's phrasing, asking for a personal response, meant that candidates could tackle it even if they were unaware of the source of the novel's title in the Book of Ecclesiastes ('The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.'). However, knowledge that the title is taken from a Biblical quotation helped many candidates shape their response as they recognised both the irony and the social criticism of Wharton's choice of title. Approaches varied widely, with some interesting discussions of the use of the various houses in the novel, none of them 'homes', and how Lily finds herself always a rootless guest. Other candidates referred to selected incidents within the novel which illustrate the heartlessness and mirthlessness of society, while some commented on Wharton's use of Selden and Gerty as two

characters on the periphery or outside the 'House of Mirth'. Some considered the novel's tragic end as the final confirmation of the irony of the title.

- (b) There were some sound and engaged responses to Lily's accidental meeting with George Dorset and answers often expressed the sense that this was yet another example of characters who miss the chance for real friendship and mutual support because of a slavish obedience to social conventions – 'we can't see each other', 'it's impossible'. There were also some general but relevant comments about male/female relationships, with the observation that secret adultery in this society is more acceptable than being seen in innocent conversation. There were some well-focused discussions of George's actions and Wharton's presentation of high emotion in a rather inarticulate man and candidates were sensitive to the fine balance between propriety, sense of injury and the wish to be kind in Lily's language. Very strong answers looked closely at the construction of the dialogue, with some precise analysis of syntax and punctuation – the way in which the frequent dashes, exclamations and questions indicate the awkwardness of the encounter, for example.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 6

- (a) Settings were interpreted quite widely; though most candidates focused on the physical locations of their chosen stories, some discussed instead wider contextual settings. Where these were clear within the story and have an impact upon it, as in the Apartheid setting of 'The Lemon Orchard', such an approach worked well, as it is directly identifiable in the character attitudes and language of the story. The colonial metaphor reading of 'Games at Twilight' was much less successful, as this is not evident within the story itself. The most successful essays often dealt with 'The Lemon Orchard' and 'The Yellow Wall Paper' as in both there is a clear physical setting – the orchard and the room – as well as the wider contextual settings of the Apartheid regime and a society which patronises and degrades women. This allowed candidates to discuss direct features of the writing which established those places through colour, light, sound and smell as well as how those are representative of, or in contrast to, the context. Physical settings were also very well discussed in Lim's 'Journey', 'The Signaller', 'The Village Saint' and 'Games at Twilight', while a very few focused on the setting as the central aspect of 'An Englishman's Home'. Successful responses depended on the text being known in enough detail to be able to explore the writer's presentation; general descriptions did not contribute to competent answers.
- (b) The answers to the passage from 'The Stoat' suggested that this was one of the less popular and well known stories, which interestingly in many cases led candidates to focus much more closely on the passage itself rather than recount the story from which it is taken. Most of the answers found something to say about each of the relationships in the passage, including that between the son and his uncle and candidates tended to find the four of them a dysfunctional group. Strong answers were able to pick up a lot of the detail in the writing, with the importance of the verb 'sang' in l.11 before ideas of relationships are undercut by discussion of money. Candidates noted that the son creates distance between himself and his father by citing his uncle's offer of a loan, suggesting an uneasy relationship, and many were shocked by the father's decision to 'Clear out' after Miss McCabe's heart attack. There was discussion of the bluntness of the dialogue from l.24, which undermines any sense of affection felt by the father towards Miss McCabe, while showing the son's detachment and distaste. Not many candidates observed that, although written in the third person, the story is told from the son's point of view, so his critical view of his father is strongly communicated. A good number did comment, though, on the provenance of the rabbit at the beginning of the passage and the relevance of the story's title.

Ama Ata Aidoo: *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa*

Question 7

- (a) There were no responses to this question.
- (b) There were no responses to this question.

William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 8

- (a) There were no responses to this question.
- (b) Amongst the few responses to this question, most candidates commented that the extract creates an interesting presentation of the triumvirate because Antony himself never appears. Instead, he is described in derogatory terms by Caesar, showing his distaste for Antony's behaviour and, perhaps, as some answers argued, his distaste for pleasure. Antony is criticised for his activities – 'fishes, drinks, and wastes/The lamps of night in revel'; he is emasculated – 'is not more manlike/Than Cleopatra'; is said to deride duty – 'To give a kingdom for a mirth'; and is immature – 'Pawn their experience to their present pleasure'. Yet the extract ends with Caesar's plea for Antony to return, which signals his military importance to the triumvirate, recognised by Caesar, even though he is the most conscious of Antony's faults. Candidates usually noted that Lepidus attempts to keep the peace in the scene, pleading for Antony and making excuses, which the majority saw as his fatal weakness.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 9

- (a) The question on More's family was the most popular question on this text. Solid responses noted that Thomas More's wife and daughter form a faithful and loving family around him, though they do not share his idealism in his opposition to the King. More nuanced answers went beyond this, marking the contrasts between Alice and Margaret, noting that Alice is uneducated but her daughter Margaret is educated, intelligent and inquisitive. The two women therefore have different attitudes to Sir Thomas whilst both sharing affection for him, and his daughter has the better understanding of his position. They are therefore used by Bolt as characters close to More who question his actions and decisions in different ways; although candidates seldom made much of Margaret's marriage to Roper which could have opened some different avenues of discussion.
- (b) Candidates who ignored the first 17 lines of the extract, and many did, overlooked key parts of its dramatic effect and significance. This is the point when the play focuses on the law, which More has always argued will protect him, and the staging of the jury brings together the Common Man's various characters – ordinary men to sit in judgement – while the Common Man is installed as foreman. Some candidates referred to the '*prolonged fanfare*' which ostentatiously begins official proceedings, establishing the formality of the occasion, and most noted that Norfolk, More's former friend, has to '*take refuge behind a rigorously official manner*' in order to read out the charge, indicating his discomfort. Observant candidates noted Cromwell's craft in his apparent insouciance as he speaks '*informally*' before landing the blow of Fisher's death '*punctiliously*' and observing More's response '*clinically*'. The significance of Fisher's death was widely recognised and picked up in More's clear '*violent shock*'. The passage repaid careful examination of both dialogue and stage directions.