

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/01
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**
- Responses must answer the specific question set and focus on this throughout.
- Effective and sustained analysis of language is essential, particularly in the passage-based questions.
- Detailed support from the text, either by short quotations or well-chosen references, is essential in all questions.
- Responses should show detailed knowledge of the text by ranging across the whole extract or poem in the passage-based questions and across as much of the novel or short story as is relevant in the essay questions.
- Candidates need to present a developed and well-structured response to the question.

General comments

Given the few entries for this session, it is difficult to generalise about the responses or make detailed comments about each question.

The Billy Collins poems were generally understood, but there was a general lack of detail and comment on language. The responses to *Songs of Ourselves* were often limited and also lacked development, with just a few straightforward comments being made in most cases.

For the Prose section, most candidates chose either *The Great Gatsby* or *Fahrenheit 451*; again, these showed some knowledge and understanding but lacked quotation or close reference. In particular, candidates need to refer to the language of the extracts. Better candidates made some response to language and showed some thoroughness in their analyses but few developed their ideas sufficiently.

The **Key messages** remain relevant and it is essential to follow this advice in order to meet the assessment criteria. Very often, candidates show some understanding but their responses are too brief and undeveloped or they do not concentrate sufficiently on language.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/02
Drama

Key messages

- Good answers to passage-based questions explore the writing in detail to show how playwrights achieve their effects.
- The best answers to discursive questions are based on relevant material from throughout the play.
- Convincing answers show an understanding of the effects of dramatic features such as: action on stage, dialogue between characters and audience response.
- Candidates can enhance their answers at all levels by giving a well-supported personal response.

General comments

Candidates usually knew their set text well and often showed a genuine engagement with characters and situations, for example to Cory's devastation at his father's refusal to give permission for him to fulfil his dream of playing football in *Fences*, or to Catherine's eagerness to get Eddie's permission to start work in *A View from the Bridge*. Candidates boosted their answers at all levels by giving a personal response which moved beyond an assertion of their own emotions to show an understanding of how the writers encouraged that particular response through the writing.

Most candidates followed the rubric of the paper and answered one question. There were some good answers on all texts. These responses focused on the question and developed their answer to cover a range of four or five points, which were supported by aptly selected material from the text. Good answers explored the writing in detail and included comment on the dramatic features of the play on stage and likely audience reaction.

Answers to passage-based questions needed to briefly establish the context of the passage, because it helped to make an informed analysis of the passage. For example, when answering **Question 1**, knowing that Catherine wants to take her first job, helps to establish the poignancy of Eddie's response to her growing up and becoming independent. However, lengthy narration of plot does not focus on the passage nor answer the question. Candidates can improve their response to the writing by analysing the effects of dramatic features such as action on stage, dialogue between characters and audience response.

When answering discursive questions, candidates needed to know their text well to select the most relevant material with which to answer the question. For example, when answering **Question 4** on Cassius from *Julius Caesar*, candidates needed to select from a range of material such as: his advice on killing Antony and battle tactics, his jealousy of Caesar and his personal greed, and how he chooses to die on an impulse based on incorrect information. Weaker responses tended to make assertions which were not backed up with textual support.

Comments on specific questions

Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 1

Candidates felt sympathy for Eddie, often because he wants Catherine to have a better job. Stronger candidates were able to develop this to consider how he is overprotective of Catherine, and is likely to have a problem with her starting work wherever it was. They quoted Beatrice's comment: '*...you gonna keep her in the house all her life?*' in support of this idea, and also the stage directions showing Eddie is '*(insulted)*' at this because it is true. Some candidates developed this further to show understanding of the deeper

implications: that this is an early indication of the extent of Eddie's love for Catherine, which is so great he does not want her to grow up and leave him, which in turn foreshadows his disapproval of her relationship with Rodolpho later in the play. Good answers supported their points with brief quotations. Better answers analysed the writing of the passage in detail, showing how Miller encourages sympathy for Eddie, for example by showing he is close to tears. Weaker answers, despite showing knowledge of the context of the passage, gave very brief answers without developed points, supporting text, or reference to language.

Question 2

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

William Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*

Question 3

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 4

Good answers to this question were well-argued. They showed understanding of the qualities which made a good leader, and explored how far Cassius had these qualities. For example, they often described Cassius as manipulative and able to read people well. As evidence to support this, candidates explored Cassius's desire to kill Mark Antony at the same time as Caesar, because he accurately judged that Antony's skills in rhetoric would be effective in arousing the people's anger towards the conspirators. Some candidates compared Cassius to Brutus, arguing that Brutus was too honourable and stubborn, showing how his refusal to kill Antony led to the opposition to the conspirators and their ultimate defeat and deaths. The best answers selected apt and detailed material from the play to support their well-developed arguments, whereas weaker answers tended to assert Cassius's leadership qualities without much development or support.

August Wilson: *Fences*

Question 5

Most candidates focused on Troy when answering this question. They explored Troy's strict approach to fatherhood, as he expects Cory to do exactly what he tells him, and commented on how Wilson has Troy insisting that Cory says "Yessir" to show respect. Weaker candidates tended to paraphrase what Troy says in the passage, such as: he tells Cory he can not play football, has to get his job back, get good grades and learn a trade. Better answers developed their comments to show understanding of Troy's decisions: that he fears Cory will be let down by the 'white man' at some point, just like Troy himself was, and that he believes Cory needs a steady job to ensure his stability in life and to provide for a family. Troy wants Cory to have a better job than he himself has on the bins. Strong answers explored the ending, where Troy suggests he does not like Cory, but saw his paternal responsibilities as limited to providing a roof and food for Cory, rather than loving him as his son; this may reflect Troy's own dysfunctional upbringing with his father. Good answers used apt textual support for their comments and explored the writing of the passage in detail.

Question 6

Candidates showed that they knew some details about Troy and Bono's friendship, such as that they met in prison. Weaker candidates commented only on Bono's advice to Troy about his relationship with Alberta – that he is risking his marriage and should stop seeing her. However, better candidates moved beyond narrating what Bono says, to explore the friendship in detail as a memorable part of the play, showing how Bono presents the audience with a different side to Troy.

Examples of these included: Bono is voicing the audience's concerns - we do not want Troy and Rose to break up; through Bono, and the friends' drinking nights, we see more of Troy's more relaxed and entertaining character, rather than merely a harsh disciplinarian father; we learn details about Troy's past hardships and upbringing which we would not otherwise know; the friendship cools off when Troy gets promotion; and Troy also resents Bono trying to 'tell him what to do' about Alberta, showing how it makes it more difficult for the audience to sympathise with Troy, since he has been warned of the dangers but chooses to carry on with Alberta. The best candidates explored a range of these inferences through close analysis of the writer's techniques.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/03
Coursework

Key messages

Set tasks which direct candidates to engage with the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Support the moderation process with the use of focused ticking and purposeful annotation.

Check that all teachers have read the 0486 Coursework Training Handbook.

General comments

The observations in this general report should be read alongside the individual report to the centre.

A wide variety of texts was seen in the work submitted, and there was much evidence of personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the topics chosen for study. Overwhelmingly candidates opted to write critical rather than empathic responses to texts.

The strongest critical essays had been worded so that candidates were explicitly directed to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects. These essays convincingly analysed relevant aspects of form, showing an appreciation of the poet, novelist or playwright 'at work'. Less confident essays showed understanding of texts, including some deeper implications, but relied too heavily on explanation and unsupported assertion rather than a close critical probing of the text. As indicated in previous reports, stronger essays combined apt succinct quotation and critical comments whereas weaker essays used lengthy inert quotation, used perhaps to illustrate a point but not to contribute to a critical analysis of the text.

There were instances of candidates submitting overly long assignments in which they trawled through the text exhaustively, often losing focus on the task that had been set. There was often a clear understanding of the text but at the expense of developing a convincingly-argued response to the question. Better responses selected material judiciously, in a way that directly addresses the question.

In view of the importance of setting tasks that enable candidates to address the assessment criteria, best practice is where departments agree the suitability of tasks early on in the course so avoiding problems later in the course.

There follows a reminder of what constitutes both good practice and less helpful practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

Each assignment starts with a clear indication of the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment is clearly stated. This is important since it allows the moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has addressed the task. Teacher annotation comprises the focused ticking of valid and thoughtful points, and concise marginal and summative comments which relate to the wording of the band descriptors. Where marks are changed during internal moderation, a brief explanation is provided. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it allows a centre to justify its award of particular marks.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided: excessive ticking (e.g. of every paragraph or every line); hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality; labelling of Assessment Objectives as 'AO'. Simply putting the supposed relevant AOs in the margin is of very little benefit to the moderator, as it does not reveal the extent to which a particular assessment objective has been addressed; instead, more specific reference should be made to the relevant band descriptors.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently. The cover sheet (or individual record card) was secured by treasury tag or staple which allowed easy access to candidate work. In these centres care had been taken to:

- include all candidates on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form
- transcribe totals accurately, including the internally moderated mark to the Mark Sheet (the MS1 or its electronic equivalent).

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