

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0397/11  
Poetry, Prose and Drama

## Key Messages

- Candidates should know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.
- Answers should focus on the writing of the texts, avoiding dwelling on the biography of their authors.
- Candidates should focus more closely on the language, imagery and structure of prose and drama as well as poetry.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus on the set poem.

## General Comments

There was a full range of responses to the texts, often demonstrating detailed knowledge and considerable insight. The strongest answers were often conceptualised responses to the questions, developing the candidate's argument with secure references, quotations and analysis of the writer's methods. Candidates should remember that they are discussing literature – the ways in which writers communicate their ideas. This means that recall of plot and characters, however detailed, will not attract high marks unless it is accompanied by discussion of how that plot is treated and those characters portrayed.

The passage based questions focus on these skills in a particular way, always asking for a close commentary or a detailed discussion of the writing of the extract. It is therefore essential that candidates provide detailed, focused discussion of the features of the passage of writing that appears on the question paper. Candidates are often prepared for this kind of close focus in discussion of poetry texts; it should be remembered that exactly the same kind of close commentary on language and structure is needed in discussion of the prose and drama passages.

The entry for this paper is comparatively small in the November session, which meant that Examiners saw very few answers on a number of texts.

### **Question 1** Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

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

### **Question 2** Thomas Hardy *Selected Poems*

- (a) A small number of candidates attempted this question, which gave an opportunity to discuss a wide range of poems. The most popular choices were 'The Self-Unseeing', 'A Thunderstorm in Town', 'The Haunter', 'Beeny Cliff' and 'The Shadow on the Stone'. The most successful answers were securely focused on the demands of the question, discussing the poetic methods Hardy uses to present past love. Many answers were weaker, as candidates became sidetracked into Hardy biography rather than a discussion of his poetry.
- (b) 'The Ruined Maid' lent itself to a range of interpretations from candidates of differing abilities. The strongest answers discussed the poem's construction through dialogue, giving it a dramatic quality, with tone of voice, accent and references to costume. Candidates made reference to the limited opportunities available to working class women which are made apparent in the poem. Simpler

answers summarised a comparison between a simple country girl and a prostitute. Few answers explored the poem's ambiguities in its use of the word 'ruined'.

**Question 3** *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There were some strong answers to this question based on appropriate choices of poems which were discussed sensitively. The most obvious choices were 'My Parents', 'Praise Song for my Mother' and 'Follower', though other poems were used with some success. The different attitudes towards parents were explored, with thoughtful comments on retrospective judgement. The most successful looked closely at how the narrative standpoint was created and analysed the effects of the poets' choices of diction, imagery and structure.
- (b) Sassoon's 'Attack' drew a large number of responses, most of which engaged very positively with the poem. There was lively comment on a number of the poem's features, such as personification, repetition and the choices of verbs and adjectives. Some answers explored creation of setting and mood in the first 4 lines and many candidates made reference to the final plea to 'Jesus', demonstrating the tone of desperation. The First World War context was usually well understood, with appropriate references to 'trenches' and 'going over the top'.

**Question 4** Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Less confident answers to this question were characterised by narrative summary, sometimes focused on a few occasions where Jane is seen to be suffering. The question of 'suffering as an essential part of Jane's development' was often more elusive, and this proved to be an important discriminator between the answers. The most confident candidates were able to match very detailed knowledge of the text to the question posed, considering ways in which Brontë shows, in the structure of the narrative, that episodes of suffering develop aspects of Jane's characterisation.
- (b) The passage describing St John Rivers was a popular option. Strong answers often began with narrative perspective and the effects of mediation through Jane's eyes, and went on to explore the language of the extract. The paradoxes between St John's kindly actions and his forbidding manner provided much to comment on; candidates noted phrases such as 'more of gloom than pleasure' and the triples 'compressed, condensed, controlled' and 'election, predestination, reprobation'. The most successful answers considered not just the words and phrases, but also explored the cumulative effects of such language.

**Question 5** Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Most answers were appropriately focused on different kinds of independence: from patriarchal society, from female oppression, from educational inequality and from colonial influences, to name a few examples. The most successful answers were rooted in detailed knowledge of the text and discussed literary features in detail as well as dealing with ideas of independence.
- (b) Candidates recognised the important features of this passage and the best answers considered the question carefully. Some focused on Tambu's observations, others on Babamukuru's household, while the strongest discussed Dangarembga's presentation of Tambu's responses, as prompted by the question wording. Such answers considered the narrator's acknowledgement of her ignorance – of bedclothes, for example – and her sense of excitement in the novelty of the School uniform and the luxurious breakfast.

**Question 6** *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) There were few responses to this question; those seen by Examiners tended to rely on narrative summary rather than on change and effects. However, the question enabled some candidates to write in thoughtful ways about the endings of stories such as 'To Da-Duh, in Memoriam', 'Of White Hairs and Cricket', 'Tyres' and 'Sandpiper'. Successful answers considered the effect of the endings on the reader, taking into account the events or characterisation in the preceding story. The poignancy of the conclusions of these stories was particularly appreciated and effectively discussed.

- (b) There was a wide range of responses to this question. Essays generally featured sound comments on setting and character with some discussion of Muni and his wife as individual characters. A number of answers, though, did not explore the dynamic of their relationship and the question's focus on the extract as an opening to the story was often insufficiently considered. Successful answers looked closely at Narayan's language and its effects, taking into account the later development of the narrative.

**Question 7** Peter Shaffer *Equus*

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

**Question 8** William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

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

**Question 9** Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- (a) A number of responses to this question provided general character studies of Blanche rather than considering the development of the play and the question of the inevitability of her fate. More successful answers demonstrated sound knowledge of the play and considered ways in which Williams's dramatic methods suggest the fragility of Blanche's illusions and hopes.
- (b) Strong answers to this question focused on the effects of stage directions as well as dialogue in Williams's characterisation. Successful candidates considered the performance possibilities and indications of 'joyfully', 'springs up', 'feverish vivacity', 'spasmodic embrace' and 'a little drily', for example. Many candidates focused rather more on Blanche than on Stella, which sometimes led to imbalanced answers and suggested a lack of awareness of how each character's dialogue and action also reveals something about the other.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0397/12

Poetry, Prose and Drama

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### **Question 1** Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Answers to this question varied widely, from essays on the joys and pains of childbirth without reference to the poem, to appreciative analytical writing on the language and structure of the poem. Candidates often wrote with sensitivity about the recreation in words of the moment of childbirth, presented in sticky tactile reality. Strong answers considered Bhatt's use of metaphors of sailing, birds and journeys. While some candidates seemed to find it difficult to discuss Bhatt's free conversational style as poetry and lapsed into paraphrase, more confident answers showed some appreciation of the irregular form of the poem, and of the use of ellipsis and repetition to convey the uncertainty of the speaker's thought processes. Some also noted the effect of the poem's control of time, moving from the present 'Now' to the past and the moment of childbirth, before returning to the present: 'And still there is the need...'

### **Question 2** Thomas Hardy *Selected Poems*

- (a) The aim of this question was to encourage candidates to consider the language and construction of Hardy's poetry rather than purely on content or biography. Nevertheless, a number of candidates paid little heed to the question's wording and summarised the content of two poems, often accompanied by a discussion of Hardy's personal life. Such answers were not successful. It is important to remember that it is possible to write a full marks answer with no reference at all to biography, but it is not possible to write a successful answer with no reference to a poem's

language and structure. Some candidates, however, embraced the question and were able to demonstrate how ideas in Hardy's poems develop through his carefully crafted stanza structures, his use of rhyme and assonance and his variations of rhythm in poems such as 'The Darkling Thrush', 'The Going', 'The Haunter', 'The Voice' and 'The Convergence of the Twain'.

- (b) 'A Church Romance' proved a very popular choice and attracted some appreciative and focused writing. While biography was not directly relevant to this question, it was notable that a considerable number of candidates assumed the poem to be about Hardy and Emma, rather than Hardy's parents. This led to some skewed and unhelpful readings. Stronger answers noted Hardy's imaginative recreation of the relationship from the point of view of the woman and commented on the subtleties of the poem's presentation of change and the effects of time. While simplistic responses suggested that the end of the poem illustrates the breakdown of love, more careful reading by most candidates responded to the presentation of a lasting relationship, though 'Age had scared Romance'. There was some thoughtful response to Hardy's dramatic recreation of the first moment, with the contrast between 'her sight/ Swept' and 'She turned again' once her attention has been caught. Some linked the 'bow' with Cupid's bow and wrote about love at first sight. Others commented on the church setting, either seeing it as appropriate, as the place of marriage, or inappropriate, as a sacred place profaned by an outbreak of secular love. Interestingly, very few candidates recognised that the poem is a sonnet, albeit one idiosyncratically set out.

### Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Answers showed that a wide range of poems could be used for this question. Popular poems were 'Childhood', 'Because I Could Not Stop For Death', 'The Trees', 'Country School', 'Cold in the Earth', 'A Quoi Bon Dire' and 'Follower'. Weaker responses gave accounts of the content of the chosen poems with no reference to 'poetic methods', while other limited responses listed various techniques and exemplified their presence in the poems with no consideration of context or how they contributed to the meaning of the poem. Strong answers showed how the poets' choices developed the meaning and contributed to the reader's understanding. Such answers were able to show, for example, some perceptive understanding of the use of changing perspective in 'Childhood' and 'Follower', appreciation of the imagery used in 'The Trees' and sensitive appreciation of the emotions expressed in 'Cold in the Earth'.
- (b) This was a very popular question, though not always well done. While there were some very confident and successful answers exploring the effects of the poem in detail, many answers were hampered by an unclear understanding, particularly of stanza two, some of the vocabulary of the poem, such as 'mockeries', 'pall', 'pallor' and 'shires', and its references to funerary practices. Examiners noted that it was frequently the case that candidates wrote about the octave of the sonnet with a degree of confidence but were unable to discuss the sestet effectively. In most answers there was an appreciation that Owen's poem presents war as destructive, futile, violent, brutal and wasteful of young lives, generating a sense of loss, waste, grief, pain, indignity and hopelessness. Stronger responses noted that the two stanzas begin with questions which are answered in the following lines, while the octave explores the chaos and destruction of the battlefield using powerful metaphors, alliteration and onomatopoeia, while the sestet is calmer and gentler, focusing on the sorrow of the bereaved at home. Some saw the sestet as equally bitter as the octave, arguing that it showed up the complicity of the nation in the slaughter – 'blinds' having more than one function. Perceptive answers commented on techniques such as the use of caesura in line 5 and the brief pause at the end of line 6 as the poet considers the idea of the very specific 'choirs' that the soldiers hear. The most successful answers were those which looked very carefully at the answers to the initial questions and noted their pessimistic substitutions for the appropriate rites of a funeral.

### Question 4 Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre*

- (a) While some candidates limited their focus to particular sections of the novel and others summarised the whole of Jane's story, this was a popular question and was often answered with confidence and appropriate detail. Successful answers discussed the stages of Jane's life in terms of the difficulties she has to overcome, focusing on the various roles which Jane is asked to perform and her reaction to them, based on moral principles which develop during the process. Some answers addressed the importance of the nineteenth century context in relation to the class and gender roles expected of her and her refusal to conform. Some strong answers compared those roles with which Jane is shown to be happy – candidate, teacher, wife, penitent, a Christian

with wealth – and those which create difficulties – an orphan, a ‘good little girl’, a governess who falls in love with her employer, an indulged bride-to-be, a mistress, a Christian like Helen Burns or St John Rivers, Rivers’ wife, a woman in contemporary society. Brontë’s ‘presentation’ was usually expressed in terms of character, while more successful responses were able to demonstrate Brontë’s creation and development of that character.

- (b) The question referred to ‘narrative style’ and strong answers focused on this term, acknowledging the opening reference to a ‘new chapter in a novel’ and the first person narrative’s direct address to the ‘Reader’. It was noted that these techniques help the protagonist to take readers into her confidence, allowing them to share her feelings. Candidates detected Brontë’s presentation of Jane’s shifting emotions during the course of the passage, picking up on phrases such as ‘I am not very tranquil in my mind’, ‘cut adrift from every connexion’ and ‘The charm of adventure sweetens that sensation... but then the throb of fear disturbs it’. Some candidates compared the internal monologue addressed to the reader with the passage of dialogue which interrupts it, the driver’s taciturnity creating some preparation for Jane’s initial experiences at Thornfield. Others were alert to the importance of the fire and Jane’s urge to progress: she is restless when waiting, but ‘jumped up’ and is ‘at my ease’ when the carriage is moving. It was sometimes noted that the narrative includes symbols – an open door and a lamp-lit street – to show Jane’s fortunes are improving.

### Question 5 Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) *Nervous Conditions* is proving to be a very popular text and this question attracted many answers. A frequent problem was that many candidates wrote at length about the ‘Englishness’ of the Nyasha, Chido and Nhamo, overlooking that the focus of the question was Tambu. A comparison of the presentation of the other three characters with Tambu often worked well, but candidates who did not ultimately focus their answers on Tambu were not successful. Better answers had a balanced approach, exploring Tambu’s resistance to ‘Englishness’ by retaining her cultural identity, customs, traditions and values, though at times Dangarembga suggests she has the potential of becoming like Nyasha. There were some very thoughtful, evaluative answers; some candidates were not convinced that she has not ‘succumbed’, providing the evidence of her embracing of white education and her attitude to her parents, while others skilfully judged the novel’s ironic tone, suggesting that while the Tambu of the novel does ‘succumb’, the retrospective narrator has emerged from it.
- (b) Many responses to this question showed an appreciation of the significance of the passage, pointing out that it was an uncharacteristic outburst by a character who had, for much of the novel, calmly accepted her lot. Some candidates went further, judging her as ignorant but astute, oppressed but pragmatic, poor but proud, bitter but truthful, who finally gains her voice. Her significance was seen as highlighting the novel’s central concerns of education, emancipation, patriarchal oppression, superstition, tradition and betrayal. Such successful answers depended on a balance between good knowledge of the whole text and detailed comment on how the language of the passage contributes to Mainini’s characterisation. Less successful answers discussed the role of women in the novel with little address to the set passage. Those who engaged with the detail were rewarded, picking up the contrasts between Mainini, Lucia and Maiguru and commenting on Tambu’s shock and ‘shame’. The importance of the seed image, ‘germinating and taking root... over a long time’, was noted, and the varied characterisation which presents Mainini as bitter but justified in her responses to Lucia and Maiguru, while also petulant and childish with ‘her mouth thrust out in a defiant pout’. Perceptive candidates noted that Nhamo’s death and the threat of losing Tambu are at the heart of Mainini’s worries, with the feelings of rejection and powerlessness.

### Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) While less confident responses relied on a retelling of narrative and summary of characters, there were many thoughtful and engaged answers to this question, considering such stories as ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’, ‘A Horse and Two Goats’, ‘Sandpiper’, ‘To Da-duh, in Memoriam’, ‘Journey’ and ‘The Open Boat’. Some candidates discussed the attractive attributes of memorable characters, such as wisdom, knowledge, pride, responsibility, determination, sincerity, humour, compassion and tolerance, but also characters’ weaknesses, such as being open to manipulation and exploitation. Such answers usually showed detailed knowledge of the stories, with references carefully used to support the points made. Stronger answers also considered the methods of characterisation used by authors, such as stream-of-consciousness, dialogue, narrative viewpoint, imagery and symbolism. Some examples were the way Narayan portrays Muni with a mixture of

comic and tragic elements, and the ways in which the Grace and Soueif gain sympathy for their central characters in 'Journey' and 'Sandpiper' through distinctive narrative styles. The interior monologue technique of 'Journey' was particularly appreciated in several answers. Sometimes candidates commented on how the use of contrast between characters makes them memorable, for example in 'To Da-duh, in Memoriam' and 'A Horse and Two Goats'.

- (b) Some candidates found this a challenging passage, having some difficulty with the layered narrative structure of Wells writing a story in which Redmond tells a story told to him by Wallace. This is, though, a central feature of the story, and many candidates appreciated that this layering is one way in which Wells gives a sense of conviction, or truth, to a fantastic narrative. They found a lot in the passage to discuss, highlighting Wallace's hesitancy and such references as 'He told it to me with such direct simplicity', 'as far as he was concerned it was a true story', 'his earnest slow voice', 'the flavour of reality' and 'I have got over my intervening doubts', all of which suggest that the narrator is convinced of at least Wallace's conviction in his story, despite its strangeness and Wallace's position 'in the world'. Many answers picked up the narrator's own careful consideration of the evidence, making the last line of the excerpt particularly important. Some answers considered the setting and atmosphere of privacy and trust in the passage, engaging the reader and giving the story its credibility, while others noticed the external evidence – the photo which shows 'something hidden', the woman who noticed something odd and Wallace's brilliant career which he finds 'dull and tedious and vain'.

#### Question 7 Peter Shaffer *Equus*

- (a) There were few answers to this question, but amongst those were some appreciative essays which demonstrated how Shaffer's easy slipping from scene to scene, from hospital to home and stable, Dysart's speeches to the audience and the theatrical horse chorus allow the playwright to explore issues in a compelling, dramatic way.
- (b) Candidates found much to discuss in this passage. Its significance was readily recognised, leading directly to Alan's failed sexual encounter with Jill and the blinding of the horses. Alert candidates noted that the episode arises from Alan's improving relationship with Dysart and Alan's consequent readiness to 'abreact'. Candidates noted Shaffer's portrayal of Jill, provocative and dominant in the exchanges with Alan and perceptive responses commented on her unconscious touching on Alan's weakness with her comments on the 'sexy' qualities of horses and the fascination of their 'eyes'.

#### Question 8 William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) Less confident answers to the question about the contrast between Hal and Hotspur tended to give a summary of both characters, sometimes with a comparison. Alert candidates noted that the question was about Shakespeare's development of this contrast and their answers frequently involved other characters and their roles in highlighting the qualities of Hal and Hotspur. Falstaff, King Henry, Worcester and Lady Percy, for example, were frequently mentioned. A number of candidates successfully argued that Shakespeare presents a contrast between old honour and modern politics with these two characters, where Hotspur's ideals are ultimately no match for realpolitik.
- (b) Candidates often seem to find Shakespeare's comedy difficult, but answers here often picked up the comic disparaging language applied to Falstaff ('A gross fat man... as fat as butter.') and appreciated the stage business of reading out aloud the details of Falstaff's expenditure and consumption while he lies sleeping on the stage. The context of the Sheriff's dismissal and Hal's lie that Falstaff 'is not here' while he slumbers massively also often featured in successful answers.

#### Question 9 Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- (a) This question was a very popular choice and stimulated a broad range of responses. Most candidates were able to respond in detail and with insight into how Williams presents Blanche and many candidates focused correctly on the dramatic qualities of the play, including stage directions, setting, lighting and music. Candidates argued very effectively for and against sympathy, though the best answers saw a careful balance of the attractive and unattractive in Williams's portrayal of Blanche, both a victim and a creator of her own fate.

- (b) In a number of answers, Examiners noted a tendency towards narrative commentary of the scene or general discussion of the characters and their relationship. A number of candidates wrote very well on the significance of the scene to the play as a whole, but did not engage sufficiently with the language and action, as the question required. Stronger answers noted the uneasy tension in the scene, commenting on the number of questions in the dialogue, which become more and more urgent as the extract progresses. Stage directions were also important, as candidates noted Stella's rejection of Stanley's embrace and Stanley's uncomfortable lighting of his second cigarette, indicating his nervousness, which Stella notices as she '*looks slowly around*'. Candidates who were able to 'see' the scene in terms of action and 'hear' the dialogue, wrote much stronger essays.

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### **Question 1** Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) There were not many answers to this question, but responses showed clear insight into the Bhatt's bitter/sweet perceptions of India as a place of beauty, vibrancy and colour, as well as the darker elements of violence, destruction, pain and guilt. Many also noted India as a part of the poet's cultural identity, her spiritual / emotional home and a source of her poetic inspiration. There was sometimes a tendency to drift into discussion of Bhatt's childhood rather than focusing specifically on images of India in the poetry.
- (b) Most candidates who had prepared Bhatt's poetry chose this question, though many seemed to find the poem difficult and did not show confident knowledge of it. Some strong, confident answers did stand out, however, showing understanding of the focus of the question. These essays examined how Bhatt achieves an interlinking of past and present time, using specific language choices, poetic devices and the structure of the poem. Some mentioned the use of phrases which suggest the passing of time, such as 'After a few days', 'Meanwhile', and 'Years pass.' More frequent was commentary on how Bhatt links the imagery of the rhesus monkeys being fed through a cage to the 'hu hu hu' speech of the 'year-old daughter' thrusting out her arms. This link of imagery gave many candidates the opportunity to discuss the idea that medical advances that benefit humans are linked to the suffering of animals in the past. Another connection between the past and the present shown in the poem is that of technological development – 'Microscopes improve'. The strongest answers commented closely on Bhatt's intermingling of imagery from two time frames and the use of the final stanza to develop the theme that progress involves a price as well as benefits.

**Question 2** Thomas Hardy *Selected Poems*

- (a) Answers to this question led to some thoughtful essays that showed strong personal engagement with and sensitive appreciation of Hardy's poetry. 'At Castle Boterel' was discussed usefully in many essays, along with 'The Going', 'The Walk', 'Your Last Drive', 'The Haunter' and 'The Voice'. Some candidates were able successfully to integrate contextual knowledge about Hardy's relationship with his wife Emma into their essays, but very often this material led to biographical recall and supposition with little reference to the poetry. Examiners noted that the most successful answers were those which focused on 'ways in which Hardy presents personal relationships', rather than on relationships themselves. Strong answers discussed poems with contrasting voices and perspectives, for example, and framed their responses to contrast the methods used and the effects of these voices. A successful pairing frequently used was 'The Haunter' with 'The Voice'. Others compared different kinds of relationships, looking at an 'Emma' poem with 'A Church Romance' or even 'The Ruined Maid'.
- (b) Overwhelmingly, Examiners gained the impression that many candidates answering on 'The Year's Awakening' were not confident in their prior knowledge of the poem; many answers read as if the candidates were approaching the poem as an unseen text. Such answers struggled with understanding the significance of the seasons in the poem and the references to the signs of the zodiac. There was also some difficulty with vocabulary such as 'tinct', 'apparelling' and 'rote'. More confident answers noted that the poem is structured around the rhetorical questions at the beginning and ending of each stanza, showing the narrator's sense of wonder at the natural world's inherent knowledge of the turning of the seasons and the rebirth of life in spring. Such answers noted the passage of time indicated by the shifting stars in the zodiac and the descriptions of the harshness of winter where 'life can scarce endure', making it remarkable that the bird begins again its 'vespering' and the 'crocus root' its growth.

**Question 3** *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There were many enthusiastic answers to this question, with favoured poems being 'Childhood', 'My Parents', 'Follower', 'Praise Song For My Mother' and 'Friend'. Cornford's, Spender's and Tuwhare's poems were particularly thoughtfully handled. Answers often showed good knowledge and understanding of the chosen poems suggesting that the candidates were well-prepared. There were many competent and intelligent comments about imagery and form which gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of poetry and to give a personal response to literary effects. In some cases, rigid preparation led to essays within a Centre using almost exactly the same examples and repeating the same points. While credit is always given to the points raised, it is refreshing to find essays that take a more original approach and where the candidate is prepared to offer discussion that develop an informed personal response. Often the most able candidates take this approach but it is still gratifying to read essays placed in the middle or lower bands that show a more personal engagement with poetry. Some answers were weakened by a lack of focus, sometimes linked to the choice of poems, with essays focusing on general memories, for example, rather than specific memories of childhood.
- (b) While this was a popular option, the poem was not always well understood, with a lack of clarity about what a 'reservist' actually is. Many candidates saw the poem as referring to a constant cycle of warfare and battles in which the narrator is involved, while some picked up the imagery of 'joust' and assumed the poem described the life of a medieval knight. However, there were also some outstanding responses in which the nuances of the poem were explored with great perception, often supported by contextual knowledge of the poet and his background. Candidates often showed understanding of the allusions to Don Quixote and Sisyphus, which helped their interpretations. The most perceptive essays gave subtle readings of the changing tone of voice in the poem, linking together the language and imagery of the poem in order to discuss ideas about monotony, cycles, and lack of freedom. They examined the recurring phrases such as 'Time again', 'again' 'We will keep charging', 'same hills', 'same trails' and images such as 'children placed on carousels'. Very pleasing were those answers which offered perceptive readings of the final stanza, discussing whether Cheng's use of 'the open sea' and 'daybreak' meant a final release from monotony because of the end of soldiering, death, or both. Others considered that the reservists become 'unlikely heroes' because, by realising their absurdity, they transcend it.

**Question 4** Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Candidates at all levels showed their knowledge, understanding and response to the novel in answers to this question. Many candidates linked Jane's passion to fire, fire imagery, and the symbolism of the colour red. Many candidates also linked fire with its opposite, ice, the absence of which indicating a lack of passion or feeling. Candidates examined how fire is used to represent passion, emotion and creativity in contrast to the imagery of ice which represents reason and duty. The balance of the two indicates Jane's development and maturity and was grasped by most candidates. There were cases, though, where the discussion of ice became so developed that it distracted focus from the terms of the question set. Typically, candidates used the narrative sequence of the novel to structure their essays, citing instances of fire and fire imagery as they worked through the novel. While this gave a solid structure and demonstrated the candidates' knowledge, those who did not rely on the narrative sequence to structure their essays were able to link incidents together more effectively by discussing their significance to Jane's character development. This approach was more sophisticated, developing particular points and demonstrating a good understanding of how Brontë repeats and builds upon motifs in varied ways.
- (b) Less successful answers to this question ignored the imperative 'Comment closely' and gave general accounts of the subject matter of Jane's and St John's disagreement, rather than engaging with the way Brontë presents their argument. The strongest answers took a detailed linguistic approach, highlighting specific features and commenting in detail on how Brontë has used those features for literary effect. For example, candidates correctly identified the use of imperative and exclamatory sentences as well as rhetorical questions to characterise Jane's assertiveness towards St John. Candidates who identified these features were able to demonstrate Jane's assertiveness by analysis and then use that as a platform from which to argue that Brontë uses these techniques to indicate to the reader a change in Jane brought about by her new financial security. Furthermore, this was also often linked to candidates' understanding of Jane's quest for autonomy, family, and love in contrast to St John's concerns with money, status and society. Strong candidates recognised Rivers' initial patronizing tone and traced at what point the argument becomes one of equals as Jane refuses to be subdued by his reason. A very few candidates noted that this dialogue is entirely without authorial or third person narrative comment, the effect of which is to pitch Jane against Rivers as equals.

**Question 5** Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Answers to this question often showed a strong personal response to the novel, the character of Lucia and her effect on Tambu. The strongest answers identified Lucia as a woman who resisted male domination by refusing to conform to expectations and instead acting on her own ideas and desires. In these answers Lucia's character was shown to influence Tambu with the poignant observation often being made that Lucia's liberation only gets her so far whereas Tambu's is more complete (even if not total). Sensitive answers gave examples of female characters in the novel who do not resist or have withered under male domination, such as Tambu's mother. In addition, Nyasha's behaviour was also often mentioned as another example of commendable resistance to male domination but for which the woman pays a high price. The role and significance of Lucia, in the most confident answers, was therefore usually linked to her impact on Tambu and as revealing the damaging effects of colonial and male oppression on its victims, despite their strength of character. Some thoughtful commentators noted that Lucia's emancipation is ironic, as it is achieved by submitting sexually to men.
- (b) Most answers were able to relate the attack on Nhamo to Tambu's determined and indomitable character. Surprisingly, some candidates wrote that they felt Tambu was 'overreacting' and that her attack on her brother was 'unprovoked' or 'inappropriate' behaviour for a sister towards her brother. Other answers made a pertinent link between this incident and the opening line of the novel and stated how the narrative depends to large extent on Nhamo's death and Tambu's subsequent educational and emancipatory opportunities. Nhamo's oppression of his own sister, including his actions leading up to the fight depicted in the passage, was commented upon usefully in explaining Tambu's feelings towards her brother's death and how this changes everything for her. Stronger answers focused on specific literary features, such as the shift in narrative voice in the final paragraph of the passage – in the strongest answers, this was confidently linked to discussion of the dual narration of the younger and older Tambu used in the novel as a whole. Other specific features mentioned were verbs characterising the 'violent', 'aggressive', or 'animalistic' nature of Tambu's attack, while she is able to speak to Mr Matimba in an adult way, but

analysis of specific literary and linguistic features was often lacking, or merely descriptive, rather than analytical.

**Question 6** *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) From a range of rich possibilities, most answers tended to focus on 'The Fall House of Usher', 'The Open Boat', 'Tyres', 'A Horse and Two Goats', 'Sandpiper', 'Journey', and 'To Da-duh, in Memoriam'. There were some narrative responses and examples of essays which tended to drift back towards plot and character, but many which engaged with the question of settings with considerable success. The most common structure was to introduce both stories and then discuss the presentation and importance of setting in each story in turn with a concluding section. Some candidates did successfully manage a more complex approach, alternating a paragraph by paragraph discussion of the setting in each story. Most essays showed a good understanding and many candidates were able to write with real sensitivity about the presentation and the influence of the settings of the stories. There was, for example, some remarkably thoughtful writing on 'Sandpiper', considering the use of the beach and all that went with it as symbolic of narrator's state of mind, with a discussion of the couple's separate rooms in the house, all as a contrast with the narrator's homeland. Equally, there was some strong writing on the fluctuating, threatening setting of the sea, and within it the small enclosure of the boat in 'The Open Boat'.
- (b) This was a popular extract and elicited a range of responses. Most sympathised with the position of the old man, though there was a sizeable minority who saw him as a trouble-making nuisance with whom the council official deals beautifully. On the whole, candidates discussed the passage in terms of the failure of communication between two people of different cultures with opposing agendas, clearly understanding the difference between Maori and European ideas about land. There was some sharp analysis of how the dialogue in the passage overlaps, with neither character really hearing the other. Good detail came in with focus on such diction as 'equivalent', 'equal' and 'understanding'. Other answers were marked by analysis of the emotive language opposed to 'officialese' and commented on the parallel dialogue without real understanding between the two characters. Very strong answers recognised that the mixture of direct speech and free indirect thought without any punctuation denotes the shift between voices, a deliberate stylistic choice to indicate the difficulty each side has in understanding the other's viewpoint.

**Question 7** Peter Shaffer *Equus*

- (a) There were not many answers to this question. Many candidates who did attempt it were able to write appropriately of Dysart's jealousy of Alan, demonstrating his awareness of the vigour of Alan's strange worship of *Equus* compared with his stale marriage and fascination with ancient, dead Greece. However, answers which linked these points to the action and structure of the play were less common. Successful answers looked at the development of the relationship between Dysart and Alan, from obstruction to trust and abreacting, noting how Alan's fascination and passion for horses is developed through re-enacted scenes or flashbacks. It was noted that such scenes are often interlinked with Dysart's revealing discussions with Hesther, such as the one from which the cue quotation was taken, or with soliloquies which develop Dysart's state of mind.
- (b) The passage question was the more popular option, though many answers were descriptive of Alan's relationship with his parents or of his religious confusion, without commenting closely on the dialogue of the extract, as the question required. Stronger answers noted that this scene is one of a sequence of characters visiting Dysart to complete part of the picture of Alan's upbringing and experiences and commented on the importance of Dora's revelations about the picture of the horse. Strong essays were alert to the stage directions, commenting on the ordinariness of Dora's 'overcoat' and 'shopping bag', making her feel out of place, picked up in 'nervously' and 'uncomfortably'. Dysart's care and compassion was noted in his stage direction 'encouragingly', which allows Dora to make her revelation. Candidates noted the slow and careful development through Dora's hesitancy, her refusal to see Alan and her reluctance to stay long. Some candidates noted the ordinariness but vigour of her dialogue – 'loaded down with chains', 'really laying on the stripes' – to accentuate the importance of the picture, while many candidates noted the importance of the passage's climactic references to the horse's eyes.

**Question 8** William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) While many candidates responded to this question by showing that Hal is presented as a boisterous, irresponsible character in the early tavern scenes, but is shown to be a brave and magnanimous soldier by the end of the play, there were a number of more probing, subtle answers as well. Some thoughtful responses questioned the identity of the 'myself' in the cue quotation, asking whether Hal means to confirm to his father that his real self is responsible and mature, or whether he is deceiving his father by confirming that he will be his own man. The strongest responses noted that this question informs the whole play, with hints and suggestions of Hal's eventual direction from very early stages. Some cited the role play scene with Falstaff, with Hal's 'I do, I will', as a key part of this development.
- (b) The passage was the less popular option and answers were often weakened by a tendency to summarise Worcester's grievances, rather than commenting on the ways in which they are presented. More careful answers noted the dignity of Worcester's long speech, beginning with 'Hear me, my liege', a forceful imperative but also acknowledging subjection to the King. The continuing courtesy of his address was noted ('your Majesty'), while he carefully lays the blame at the King's door ('I must remember you', 'you did swear that oath', 'you yourself have forg'd against yourself'). Candidates noted the emphasis Worcester lays on their former friendship and his loyalty, and the reasonableness of his recounting of the events which led to the rebellion, without any anger. Some noted the steady lines of iambic pentameter which emphasise this, with comments on the forceful caesura before the 'But' in l.25. There were good comments too on the cuckoo metaphor, and at least one candidate commented on the seven different examples of the diction of swearing and oaths.

**Question 9** Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- (a) The question on Stanley provoked some lively and personal responses. On the whole, candidates lined up very firmly against him, though there were some more balanced answers. Many were very keen to illustrate the 'animal thing' part of the question, with defences to his smashing of light bulbs, hitting of Stella and rape of Blanche. He was often seen very much as Blanche sees him – as an uneducated, unsophisticated brute. More careful answers also noted the 'good as a lamb' part of the question, and while candidates found this hard to support beyond his reconciliation with Stella after hitting her, many did acknowledge his dynamism, his colour and sexual power, noting his association with his 'package' of 'meat', the smashed light bulbs and Stanley's and Stella's 'low animal moans'. Many argued that he was misjudged and goaded by Blanche, which attracted some audience sympathy towards Stanley, but noted that this is shockingly lost in the rape scene with Blanche.
- (b) There was a high number of answers to the passage question, though a disappointing number summarised how Blanche had deceived Mitch, with a full history of her misdemeanours and Mitch's rejection of her to safeguard his mother. Successful answers noted the injunction to 'Comment closely' and found much to discuss in both the dialogue and Williams's stage directions. They noted the pretence in Blanche's search for and discovery of alcohol and Mitch's assertive body language, with a 'foot up on the bed' and the tearing of the paper lantern, and the contrast between Blanche's long, fluttery desperate speeches and Mitch's terse monosyllabic replies. Candidates commented on how this makes Blanche look foolish but also draws sympathy towards her through the dramatic irony, as her speeches are constructed of questions, exclamations, ellipses and dashes. Mitch's lines, by contrast are blunt, colloquial and sarcastic.