

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 2010/12 Poetry and Prose 12</p>
--

Key messages

In order to do well in this subject, candidates should be discouraged from:

- giving unneeded extraneous biographical information
- commenting on how the use of punctuation exclusively adds to the mood and tone of a poem
- describing rhyme schemes and verse forms without showing their function
- answering the general essay question on a text solely by reference to the extract
- treating a poem or passage as an Unseen exercise.

Success will come from:

- a relevant, individual and carefully argued response to the question
- detailed knowledge of the text supporting the points made
- careful commentary on the writer's choice of words and on the effects created.

General comments

There was much admirable work from all parts of the world and it is a constant pleasure to read the scripts of candidates who clearly love the subject and engage with their set texts. The most accomplished answers were full of well supported personal responses to the questions and showed sensitivity to the writers' methods and intentions.

Most candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of their texts, and as usual there were some strong answers to questions. What characterised these good responses was an ability to focus clearly on the terms of the question, and to direct relevant material, supporting it with succinct reference to, and often direct quotation from, the text concerned. Exploration of writers' use of language, and analysis of this, particularly in response to poetry answers, was the hallmark of a high-band answer.

The performance of some candidates was limited by their lack of focus on the terms of the question, and candidates might well be advised to think more carefully about what a question is asking, and plan out a response more carefully, before setting out to respond. In previous reports, we have made the point that it is worth spending five minutes on underlining the key words and creating a brief plan relating to them before beginning writing and it was good to see that in many cases this advice had been noted and acted upon. Some candidates limited themselves by offering a narrow range of material which they repeated, sometimes several times, during their response. The intensifiers in the question, the words such as 'vividly', 'dramatically', 'memorably', were still neglected as was apparent from the lack of response to the quality of the writing. Many candidates did continually refer back to the question, focusing on the key words, for example, 'moving', 'joy' and 'create drama', which helped them provide answers which addressed the question.

Long quotations, or listing key words and labelling them a 'semantic field', is description and not analysis. Recognition of literary devices such as similes and alliteration does not by itself constitute analysis. Describing rhyme schemes and verse forms is rarely particularly relevant to the question. The use of phrases

such as 'positive' or 'negative connotations' communicates very little and there was an increase in the use of imprecise slang expressions such as 'positive vibe' and 'zoned out'. Precise comments on the effects created are essential in order to make useful points and they are the sign of a good answer. All questions offer the opportunity to address AO 3 ('recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language) and without an attempt to engage with the writing answers will not reach the higher Bands.

Though not as significant a number as in the previous series, there were still examples of essay questions being answered by candidates using exclusively the material in the printed passage. Candidates need to remember that there is a choice of questions on each text and that the second one is a standalone general essay question. The passage is relevant only to the question which is asked on it; using it as the basis of an answer to the second question on the text involved is always going to be at best self-limiting, since it does not offer enough material for a general discursive answer.

The strongest essays deployed quotation judiciously – that is to say, used only those words actually required to substantiate the point being made, and integrated them into their own sentences. Excessively long quotations can at most be only inert illustrations of a point, and not an opportunity for close textual analysis. Some candidates used ellipsis to reduce the length of their quotations, but often in so doing cut out the very words that would most usefully support the point being made. Some referred only to line numbers, which demonstrated very little in terms of understanding or of commentary.

For a long time the passage-based questions have been significantly more popular than the discursive ones, and this continued to be the pattern though there were some pleasing responses to the general questions on some of the novels, in particular *No Longer at Ease* and *Silas Marner*. Those candidates who did attempt the general questions often achieved highly because of the quality of their engagement with the text and the persuasiveness of their arguments, though they were sometimes over-reliant on generalisations and could have benefited from even just a little more specific reference. In the passage-based questions a lot of responses did not look closely enough at the effect on the reader who, surely, must be the obvious focus. Candidates need to give more consideration to what makes them smile, laugh, feel empathy / sympathy or even feel disturbed and then look for the evidence within the passage.

There was still a good deal of evidence that candidates were using the passage-based questions as 'Unseen' exercises; particularly the poetry questions where lack of understanding rapidly revealed itself. Similarly with the prose extracts, a lack of knowledge of the context quickly became apparent. The words 'at this moment in the novel' or variants of them are a signal to candidates that they need to use the wider context to support their ideas. Answers which limit themselves entirely to the extracts will probably not achieve particularly highly. There is no escaping the fact that candidates need to know the texts in detail.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Poetry

THOMAS HARDY: from *Selected Poems*

Question 1: *I look Into My Glass* and *Nobody Comes*

Too often candidates included biographical details with these Hardy poems, presumably in the mistaken belief that these counted as literary comments.

The first poem was usually understood by candidates, though some seemed to take it that Hardy's main feeling of depression resulted solely from his getting old and wasting away. Some missed the point that his emotions remain the same as when he was a young man. In fact few candidates attempted to analyse language or the way the tone of the poem is created by the poet, and this limited the quality of response to this question which asks 'how' feelings are movingly conveyed. Candidates noted accurately enough the loneliness of the speaker in the second poem, though comments on the atmosphere and setting could have been developed further had candidates spent more time on the language and less time making clear what was happening in the poem. Tying the poem to the specific interpretation that it describes Hardy's wait for his wife to return from hospital limited the scope for discussion.

Question 2: *The Voice*

Many candidates spent more than enough time on biographical and marital background, and less than ideal time on the analysis of the language of the poem. This poem was well enough understood by most who offered it, but better responses went beyond paraphrase and explanation to explore 'the ways' Hardy

'movingly conveys' grief in the poem – in other words they responded to the terms of the question. Some mentioned the dampness and colourlessness of the setting, the reference to wind and rain, and the repetition of questioning which some argued to be the speaker's yearning for the voice to be 'real' and not just an hallucination. However few considered the link between air, breeze and wind, for example, or picked up on the sibilance in stanza 3. Only the most developed answers looked closely at the language, the effects of the repetitions, and of the change of rhythm in the final stanza.

From JO PHILLIPS ed: *Poems Deep & Dangerous*

Question 3: *The Gift*

This was a popular poem and practically all candidates noted the role reversal it contains. Almost all understood the poem and the idea that an awful accident can be a gift if it produces such a wonderful response in someone who is so dear to you. Some speculated on the relationship between the mother and her son before the accident, but offered no textual evidence for this. Those who looked at the effects of the mother's description of her son as 'tall, cool ... sixteen' and spent a little time exploring the implications of this turned it into a very useful point. Most made some relevant comment on a little of the language, especially the image of the mother bird 'guarding its young', though higher achieving answers offered a little more comment on this than the standard answer which noted the role reversal and just quoted this without comment as 'proof'. Clearly, answers were differentiated by the level of analysis offered as most understood the poem, some however suggesting that the mother and son had always had a close relationship, and citing her calling him 'cool' as proving how much she admired him. Only the most accomplished answers made anything of the one-line tailpiece of the poem – set apart from the rest.

Question 4: *Laundrette*

There were quite a number of responses to this poem, and candidates usually managed to focus on the 'atmosphere' as the question asks, but the level of analysis of how this is vividly depicted varied enormously. Most responses said something about the literal 'atmosphere' – steam and blurring – 'nebulous in steam' – though 'calms the air' made no impression and was not considered. The sights, colours, but particularly the sounds of the laundrette were looked at in varying degrees of closeness and analysis, and better answers were able to direct this material to make a relevant response to the question. Many candidates were able to grasp the metaphorical force of the poem and wrote convincingly about the washing machines' cycle representing the predictability of the customers' lives. The most accomplished answers were able to analyse the presentation of the little thumbnail portraits of the denizens of the establishment, and argue what and how these add to the atmosphere of the place. Similarly, stronger answers noted the way in which the public space creates an even deeper isolation between those characters. Unfortunately not everyone seemed to be aware what a laundrette is, supporting the point that not all poems had been studied in sufficient detail in advance of the examination.

Songs of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 5: *The Lost Woman...*

This was a popular poem but often it appeared only partly understood. Generally candidates tried to analyse the relationship between the mother and daughter prior to the mother's death, and there was much speculation and little hard evidence given. More confident answers saw the importance for the relationship and the poem of 'I never saw / Her buried' but often did not elaborate sufficiently on this. Less accomplished answers misunderstood altogether 'So a romance began', but candidates who did understand this made some useful comment on the complex nature of the relationship when discussing it. A few candidates made comment on the image of the 'ivy-mother' and 'My tendrils are the ones that clutch'. At this point many candidates who did not understand the poem merely cut to the end and ignored the imaginary life of the mother created by the daughter. Others who did not understand took this as a reminiscence of the mother's actual life. A few who did understand this and were willing to discuss it in detail managed to get a long way towards the core of the poem and, indeed, to answering the question of how the poet conveys 'the complex relationship' between speaker and mother. Very few candidates managed to make much of stanzas 4 and 5. Those who had an inkling of what Beer was 'on about' here were able to make the necessary comparison between 'Many a hero' and 'my lost woman' who 'snaps'. More needed to be made of this verb. Most, however, made comment – relevant or not – to the fact that at the end of the poem the 'lost woman' turns out to be the speaker, not the mother, an irony, one candidate argued, that was hinted at by the ellipsis in the title of the poem.

Question 6: 'She Was a Phantom of Delight'

This was probably the most popular question on the whole paper, but few candidates did much more than point out what they thought the poet is saying (or 'trying to say'). More analysis of the language rather than mere reference to it would have elevated most of the responses that were offered. Generally candidates related 'joy' to happiness and this was obviously acceptable, though many less confident candidates merely set out on a long paraphrase and only reached the word 'joy' in their final paragraph, sometimes their final sentence. Not many candidates were convincing in any way on the expression 'The very pulse of the machine'. Candidates quoting 'Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles' did not analyse the words individually or comment on the effect of them all together like this, merely device-spotting 'asyndeton' and leaving it at that. All in all, there was a lack of focus on the wording of the question and a reluctance to explore the implications of some of the imagery used.

Section B: Prose

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer at Ease*

Question 7

This was a popular question on a popular choice of text, but the focus on drama was maintained by only a minority of those opting to answer it. Better answers briefly sketched in the context before looking closely at the full passage. Much of the drama is as a direct consequence of what Obi has to 'report back' to Clara, and his consequent anxiety in meeting her to do this. Very few answers giving the context then went on to spell out this underlying dramatic tension. Many responses did manage to comment on the drama which unfolds when Clara and Obi do eventually meet, though few looked sufficiently closely at the dialogue to make perceptive comment on how it reveals the tension between them. Candidates who did this achieved highly. The conversation between Clara and Obi where 'Obi had done his best to make the whole thing (his parents', in particular his mother's, outright opposition to the wedding) sound unimportant' needed a lot more attention than most candidates afforded it. Most contented themselves with a reference to Clara's threat to throw her engagement ring 'out of the widow': relevant material but under-directed in terms of the drama of the passage. Surprisingly few focused on Clara's comments that there was something she wanted to tell him and that he should 'forget' it – many did not mention at all the context for this, showing some lack of knowledge of the text. There were only a few attempts to comment on the impact of the writing, for example on the effect of the reference to the traffic and to the procession in building tension.

Question 8

There were some very convincingly argued responses to this question; in fact it was one of the more popular general essay questions and had clearly been discussed and carefully thought about. There were some under-directed narrative responses in weaker answers. Many answers made clear that Obi's downfall involved the taking of bribes, the notion of which he pours scorn on earlier in the novel. Many also asserted that his stubbornness in persisting in his plan to marry Clara, an *osu*; his pride in living up to the demands and expectations of other people of a man in his position; his bad luck at having money stolen and his response to this, and – perhaps less convincingly – various arguments with the Umuofia Progressive Union all lead to his downfall, but few really argued this fully or considered 'to what extent' this makes his downfall his own fault. More accomplished answers explored his character in some depth and were able to see, and indeed argue, that the idea of bribery was so endemic that it might be said that it was impossible for anyone – even someone less naïve, less idealistic and less pig-headed than Obi – to resist becoming involved at some stage. Some candidates had clearly learnt some quotations and used them even though they did not fit the subject matter, trying to force them into the discussion.

JANE AUSTEN: *Northanger Abbey*

Question 9

Few answers to this question really explored the ways it was entertaining, though some did make a few relevant comments about some of the gentle mockery of girls like Catherine that Henry indulges in here. Very few seemed to be familiar with the social niceties and rules which Austen is mocking. The main restricting feature was the lack of sensitive appreciation of the wit and role-playing, almost, that Henry Tilney is given by Austen in this section. This was caused by the inattention to close details of the writing itself – something which this question demanded if a well-developed relevant personal response was to be achieved.

Question 10

There were only a few responses to this question and they tended to be somewhat narrative. Some focused on Catherine's constant immersion in Gothic novels; some were able to compare her ideas, as fostered by this immersion, with the reality of Northanger Abbey when she visits it; and most were able to make reference to her outrageous conviction that Henry Tilney's mother has been murdered by his father. Listing these is one thing – directing them to the terms of the question proved another, and very few candidates ended up with a really relevant answer to what makes these things such a memorable and significant part of the novel, let alone how Austen makes Catherine's obsession with Gothic novels, which leads to these things, equally memorable and significant.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 11

Only the more confident responses were able to offer a range of references to the passage to show how amusing or how engaging the action is here. Very few reached the level where they could comment on the way that Eliot expresses the material – a major part of the entertainment here – and therefore these were able to offer only reasonably developed answers. These reasonably developed responses usually commented on how little Eppie's escape is quite amusing because of her resourcefulness, and many were able to see the failed attempts of Silas to be cross with her as amusing and therefore entertaining. Some even made comment on the delighted response of Eppie to the threat of being put in the coal-hole. However no comment was made on the dead-pan last line of the passage: '... though, perhaps, it would have been better if Eppie had cried more.'

Question 12

Most responses heartily agreed with the judgement offered of Godfrey. The standard answer berated Godfrey for his treatment of his wife, Molly; the way he initially relinquishes any real care for Eppie; and afterwards for his selfish desire to take her away from Silas. More insightful answers realised that 'to what extent?' requires a more thoughtful approach to answering, and looked at the question in a more balanced manner. Most were able to see him as a cut above his brother: maybe a 'victim of circumstances', not evil but careless, and sometimes badly treated. One really well-developed and well-argued response saw that perhaps his suffering was such that by the end he had maybe paid more than enough for his lack of judgement in his earlier life. What characterised an effective answer was – as usual – an excellent knowledge of the text and a judicious selection of material to support a well-argued answer to the terms of the question.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 13

There were fewer responses to this novel than might have been expected, but the majority of those answering on it selected this question. High achieving answers needed to look closely at the passage and to direct the material carefully to the terms of the question. Often such answers started with a brief contextualising paragraph before homing in on some of the disturbing detail, and then exploring the language used to present it. Some insightful responses commented on the dialogue, and the increasing pressure (verbal and at 'bayonet'-point) Stephen comes up against. The short sentences making clear the frozen terror Stephen experiences were often quoted and commented upon effectively to argue the disturbing nature of the scene. Effective answers also made comment on the unpleasant implications of Keith's mother always wearing a scarf, and what this suggests about where Keith learns this kind of torturous behaviour. The last lines of the passage were rarely commented upon.

Question 14

This was a less popular question, but those who attempted it knew the text and generally showed great sympathy for Auntie Dee, who carries on without her husband and in fact is betrayed by her own sister. They generally wrote persuasively and supported their answers in general terms though some precise details would have enhanced them.

SUSAN HILL: *I'm the King of the Castle*

Question 15

Fewer examples of response to this text appeared than expected this series. Those who offered this text almost all attempted this question and usually found something relevant to say, though this often just boiled down to the fact that Kingshaw had very little 'relationship' with adults, even his mother. Some made this point quite clearly, seeing her as more interested in making headway in a relationship with Mr Hooper, and quoting – relevantly – 'Do not spoil everything for me'. Few candidates got far enough to consider Kingshaw's limited relationship with Mr Hooper. In fact it was rare for any answer to address the issue of 'vivid portrayal' of relationship, because the writing of the passage was not generally explored in any depth.

Question 16

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make meaningful comment.

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 17

This was a popular choice. Most were able to say that the Headmaster has no control over his children and that he and his wife have a poor relationship. Some then developed this with a number of relevant quotations from across the passage but others tended to repeat the same idea, lacking detail and development. Quite a few wrote extensively about Krishna's home life which, although relevant to a point when paired with the quotation that the Headmaster felt more at home there, often took up too much of the essay, as focus was lost on the passage. Most answers were very hostile to the Headmaster's wife, and very willing to pity the man who doesn't seem to want to be at home but instead in his school. A few more successful answers noticed that the question looked for response to 'striking portrayal' of the home life and made the effort to look at Narayan's writing, but such answers were few and far between.

Question 18

Only a few responses to this question were offered and most seemed to have only the haziest idea of who Dr Sankar is. Some candidates understood Dr Sankar's role in the novel but were unable to provide much specific detail to support their arguments. Consequently, responses tended to be narrative, assertive and general in their approach. There was no recognition of Narayan's satirical treatment of him.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Question 19

There is much relevant material in this passage, yet many candidates found it difficult to develop a convincing response to the question set. Most of the problems came from candidates not responding fully enough to the 'how?' of the question. Reading of the passage was rarely rigorous enough, but even when candidates found several relevant areas for discussion (the cheque and the fact it is drawn on the account of a very respectable person; the building itself; Mr Enfield's caginess; his strange inability even to describe Hyde) they rarely explored the language used to present this, and hence missed the opportunity to tackle what the question really demands. Some candidates spent an inordinate amount of time on discussing Victorian attitudes to privacy.

Question 20

This was a much less popular a question, and candidates who offered it often struggled to supply sufficient detail of the relationship between the characters. Few seemed able to see how the closeness of their friendship and their mutual friendship with Jekyll proves significant in the way in which the story is narrated. More successful answers were able to detail the two characters' experiences of contact with Hyde and direct this to the terms of the question. Often, though, such material did not get much beyond the narrative of incidents. Few candidates made anything of the effect on Utterson of Lanyon's death, and the key exposition of the truth that is offered in what Lanyon has left behind him. The most accomplished answers to this question had a good grasp of the structure of the novel, realised that Utterson and Lanyon were crucial to its effectiveness, and showed how.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21: *Ming's Biggest Prey*

This was a popular question, but sometimes candidates did little more than re-tell some of the passage. In fact, more detail needed to be explored than most candidates seemed to realise. Sometimes the answers were too general on the relationship between Ming and Teddie and did not go far beyond narrative illustration of it. High achieving answers always made it clear what was 'satisfying' about the ending, and went further than just making the point that Eddie 'had it coming to him' for his treatment of Ming. Some answers took the 'satisfying' to mean satisfying to Ming, and some credit was allowed for this, but the most accomplished answers were able to argue that a wide range of problems mounting for Elaine, including the likely killing of her pet and the loss of her expensive jewellery, were solved to the readers' delight by Ming's actions. These answers looked at the language of the presentation of this ending during the printed passage and showed how this contributed to how 'satisfying' the ending becomes. A few candidates were horrified by a cat committing murder and getting away with it. Somehow they still managed to agree that the ending was 'satisfying'. This question did demonstrate the point made above concerning knowledge of the texts and the importance of context, since a few candidates seemed to have no idea that Ming is a cat. The most effective responses looked at how the whole story was written from Ming's viewpoint, and therefore his victory was made more satisfying because we felt part of it.

Question 22: *The Prison*

Candidates answering this question generally made a reasonable attempt to justify the appropriateness of the title, and better answers were able to quote selectively to draw the parallels between physical prison and the metaphorical prison of Tommy's sterile, meaningless life: trapped in a loveless marriage; bored by a tedious job; and powerless to break free from his boredom and discontent. Many of the most accomplished answers attempted to make something of his dealings with the little girl who steals from the shop, and some managed to do more than merely add the narrative of this – seeing it sometimes as Tommy's desperation to prevent her becoming trapped in a life of thieving, an attempt maybe to make a difference to someone who may end up like himself. Practically all candidates were able to say something relevant. The highest achieving were able to offer a range of material and to argue their viewpoint, and not let the narrative speak for itself. Frequently candidates were able to provide relevant quotations and language comments.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13
Poetry and Prose 13

Key messages

In order to do well in this subject, candidates should be discouraged from:

- giving unneeded extraneous biographical information
- commenting on how the use of punctuation exclusively adds to the mood and tone of a poem
- describing rhyme schemes and verse forms without showing their function
- answering the general essay question on a text solely by reference to the extract
- treating a poem or passage as an Unseen exercise.

Success will come from:

- a relevant, individual and carefully argued response to the question
- detailed knowledge of the text supporting the points made
- careful commentary on the writer's choice of words and on the effects created.

General comments

There was much admirable work from all parts of the world and it is a constant pleasure to read the scripts of candidates who clearly love the subject and engage with their set texts. The most accomplished answers were full of well supported personal responses to the questions and showed sensitivity to the writers' methods and intentions.

Most candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of their texts, and as usual there were some strong answers to questions. What characterised these good responses was an ability to focus clearly on the terms of the question, and to direct relevant material, supporting it with succinct reference to, and often direct quotation from, the text concerned. Exploration of writers' use of language, and analysis of this, particularly in response to poetry answers, was the hallmark of a high-band answer.

The performance of some candidates was limited by their lack of focus on the terms of the question, and candidates might well be advised to think more carefully about what a question is asking, and plan out a response more carefully, before setting out to respond. In previous reports, we have made the point that it is worth spending five minutes on underlining the key words and creating a brief plan relating to them before beginning writing and it was good to see that in many cases this advice had been noted and acted upon. Some candidates limited themselves by offering a narrow range of material which they repeated, sometimes several times, during their response. The intensifiers in the question, the words such as 'vividly', 'dramatically', 'memorably', were still neglected as was apparent from the lack of response to the quality of the writing. Many candidates did continually refer back to the question, focusing on the key words, for example, 'moving', 'joy' and 'create drama', which helped them provide answers which addressed the question.

Long quotations, or listing key words and labelling them a 'semantic field', is description and not analysis. Recognition of literary devices such as similes and alliteration does not by itself constitute analysis. Describing rhyme schemes and verse forms is rarely particularly relevant to the question. The use of phrases

such as 'positive' or 'negative connotations' communicates very little and there was an increase in the use of imprecise slang expressions such as 'positive vibe' and 'zoned out'. Precise comments on the effects created are essential in order to make useful points and they are the sign of a good answer. All questions offer the opportunity to address AO 3 ('recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language) and without an attempt to engage with the writing answers will not reach the higher Bands.

Though not as significant a number as in the previous series, there were still examples of essay questions being answered by candidates using exclusively the material in the printed passage. Candidates need to remember that there is a choice of questions on each text and that the second one is a standalone general essay question. The passage is relevant only to the question which is asked on it; using it as the basis of an answer to the second question on the text involved is always going to be at best self-limiting, since it does not offer enough material for a general discursive answer.

The strongest essays deployed quotation judiciously – that is to say, used only those words actually required to substantiate the point being made, and integrated them into their own sentences. Excessively long quotations can at most be only inert illustrations of a point, and not an opportunity for close textual analysis. Some candidates used ellipsis to reduce the length of their quotations, but often in so doing cut out the very words that would most usefully support the point being made. Some referred only to line numbers, which demonstrated very little in terms of understanding or of commentary.

For a long time the passage-based questions have been significantly more popular than the discursive ones, and this continued to be the pattern though there were some pleasing responses to the general questions on some of the novels, in particular *No Longer at Ease* and *Silas Marner*. Those candidates who did attempt the general questions often achieved highly because of the quality of their engagement with the text and the persuasiveness of their arguments, though they were sometimes over-reliant on generalisations and could have benefited from even just a little more specific reference. In the passage-based questions a lot of responses did not look closely enough at the effect on the reader who, surely, must be the obvious focus. Candidates need to give more consideration to what makes them smile, laugh, feel empathy / sympathy or even feel disturbed and then look for the evidence within the passage.

There was still a good deal of evidence that candidates were using the passage-based questions as 'Unseen' exercises; particularly the poetry questions where lack of understanding rapidly revealed itself. Similarly with the prose extracts, a lack of knowledge of the context quickly became apparent. The words 'at this moment in the novel' or variants of them are a signal to candidates that they need to use the wider context to support their ideas. Answers which limit themselves entirely to the extracts will probably not achieve particularly highly. There is no escaping the fact that candidates need to know the texts in detail.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Poetry

THOMAS HARDY: from *Selected Poems*

Question 1: *At the Word 'Farewell'*

The most successful responses explored with some sensitivity the ways in which Hardy uses language and form to convey powerful emotions. These responses considered the impact of the ghostly atmosphere and the description of the dawn and dampness in conveying the speaker's emotions. There was consideration of the lack of a sense of the future for the speaker, and of the role of fate in his life-changing meeting with the woman. Stronger responses were alert to the implications of the final stanza: the declaration made by the speaker at the start and the crimson cheek 'When we came in together' at the end. There was less evidence in this session of candidates pursuing a doggedly overly-assertive biographical reading of the poem.

Question 2: *The Convergence of the Twain*

The highest achieving responses provided sensitive explorations of the ways in which Hardy uses language to striking effect. There was much detailed probing of the descriptions of the sea-worms crawling over the opulent features of the sunken Titanic. More confident responses linked their comments on language to a consideration of 'The Pride of Life that planned her' and 'this vaingloriousness down here'. The role of 'The Immanent Will', the metaphor of the 'sinister mate', and the dramatic impact of 'Now!' in the final stanza were also explored. Few responses, however, connected the ideas on pride and vanity to the detail of the poem such as the blackened jewels ('their sparkles bleared and black'). In less successful responses, candidates

often adopted a feature-spotting approach where imagery and sound devices were identified and sometimes explained. These responses tended to be list-like, rather than developed critical responses.

From Jo Phillips ed.: *Poems Deep and Dangerous*

Question 3: *Shall I Compare Thee...?*

A few confident answers offered convincing personal responses to the total commitment of the speaker and the sheer exuberance of his address to his lover. There were sustained critical explorations of the use of metaphor and hyperbole in making the sonnet such a moving expression of love. Inevitably the widespread availability of study guides to the poem took its toll in many responses, as candidates opted to describe the content through each quatrain and up to and including the rhyming couplet that ends the sonnet. There were many descriptions of the ABAB rhyme scheme which 'makes the writing flow'. Too often comments on poetic structure and form led to the logging of features rather than a purposeful critical exploration of the effects Shakespeare creates. Phrases such as 'The sonnet begins with...' and 'The ending of the sonnet...' were often more helpful as paragraph starters in those answers which provided sustained analysis of both content and techniques.

Question 4: *First Love*

Virtually all responses acknowledged the unrequited nature of the speaker's love, the suddenness of the experience of first love, the blinding beauty of the girl and the subsequent onslaught on the speaker's senses. The most confident responses explored Clare's striking use of imagery, and commented on the suggestion of the permanent effect of the experience on the speaker. These responses kept in their sights the task: 'Explore the ways in which Clare vividly conveys the strength of the speaker's feelings in *First Love*.' The strongest answers engaged fully with the steer in the question provided by the adverb 'vividly', and often provided fresh explorations of this mainstay of school poetry anthologies. Less successful responses disregarded the main thrust of the question and worked through each stanza in turn, often adopting a descriptive and overly-assertive approach. Comments about the experience being 'relatable', and overly empathic comments about blood rushing to the reader's face and burning about the reader's heart, offered general rather than critical responses.

Songs of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 5: *Lovers' Infiniteness...*

The most successful answers engaged with the poet's use of structure in their analysis of the development and resolution of the speaker's argument. These responses explored the implications created by the use of transactional imagery ('bargain', 'stocks', 'outbid') and what this revealed about the speaker. There was alertness too to what the use of hyperbole ('Sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters I have spent') revealed of the speaker's character and his own sense of his having been treated unjustly. Less confident responses worked through each stanza with an explanation of what the speaker was 'trying' to say; such responses neglected the main thrust of the question: 'How does Donne *strikingly* convey...?' These responses would have been lifted by some consideration of the ways in which Donne achieves his effects. As with **Question 3** (on '*Shall I Compare Thee...*'), much time was expended to the identification of the rhyme scheme without purposeful critical comment.

Question 6: *Tiger in the Menagerie*

The most accomplished responses focused clearly on the question ('How does Jones create a sense of menace...?') and rooted their interpretation in the detail of the poem. They pointed to the mystery surrounding the tiger's entry into the menagerie ('No one could say') and the effects of the blurring of the bars of the cage, and the stripes of the tiger and the impact of the repeated word 'lashes'. Most were able to comment on the personification of the aviary in the final stanza ('if the aviary could, it would lock its door') and the panic conveyed by 'Its heart began to beat in rows of rising birds'. These points were readily linked to the question's 'sense of menace'. There were, however, some responses that attempted to impose a particular rehearsed reading of the poem which neglected to address the question. Some responses that argued the tiger represented violence in society or violence within the human heart did not always support their arguments by means of careful reference to the detail of the poem. Detailed exploration of the precise effects of language, structure and form in response to the question ('How...?') should help to avoid rigid and overly-assertive readings of a poem.

Section B: Prose

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer at Ease*

Question 7

The relatively few responses seen were confident about the context: Obi's return from his years of study in England. The references to bribery towards the end of the extract were satisfactorily placed within the wider context of the novel. Some candidates, however, focused very largely on this aspect of the extract without exploring the detail of Achebe's writing. Only the most accomplished responses analysed the elaborate formality of the reception and language of the Welcome Address, contrasted with the informality that characterised Obi's own speech and appearance. These responses acknowledged the humour in the extract: in particular, the comedy presented in the contrast between the verbosity of the secretary of the union and immediately afterwards the feebleness of Obi's efforts at public speaking. Obi's two mistakes revealed the gap between Obi's English-influenced demeanour and the expectations of his compatriots. Less developed responses worked through the extract in order in an explanatory way rather than develop a commentary based on carefully-selected detail from the extract.

Question 8

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

JANE AUSTEN: *Northanger Abbey*

Question 9

Only a few responses were seen, and few captured the sheer awfulness of Isabella in the printed extract, with a number of answers misreading her 'chastising' of Mr Morland and the 'playfulness' of her banter. The more successful responses explored the qualities of Austen's writing (in particular, the use of dialogue) in capturing Isabella's melodramatic entrance ('I have been wretched without you'), her exaggerations regarding both James and Eleanor Tilney, and her flirtatiousness. The most accomplished responses commented on the way in which Catherine begins to see through Isabella.

Question 10

The few who attempted this question enjoyed giving their opinions on this larger-than-life character. Most of the responses acknowledged Thorpe's boorishness and his materialism, his looking for a rich wife, his mistakenly believing that Catherine fits the bill, and his ruthlessness in trying to prevent her engaging with the Tilneys. However, there was little evidence of a detailed exploration of Austen's writing, and the varied ways in which she captures Thorpe's superficiality – not least in her mockery of his great interest in sports and his minimal interest in books.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 11

The most accomplished answers made judicious selection of detail from the extract and developed their responses in detail, exploring the language of their chosen references in order to show how Austen makes the moment so dramatic. The moment captures Molly on her way to expose Godfrey. High achieving responses explored Eliot's use of language, form and structure – with particular emphasis on the shock of Silas's entrance with Eppie, the narrative focus on Godfrey's inner turmoil upon recognising his daughter, and the intervention of the squire and rector. These responses saw the importance to the rest of the novel of Silas's sudden realisation that he must keep the child. They grasped too the extract's significance within the wider novel, namely that this incident leads to the greater acceptance of Silas in the Raveloe community.

Question 12

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make meaningful comment.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 13

Those who did well kept the key word ‘amusingly’ in their sights and captured the humour in the boys’ naïve thoughts and rituals, contrasted with the real trials and dangers of the adult world they would soon be a part of. These more successful responses referred not only to the mimicking of secret rituals but also the way in which children imbue random objects with such significance. These responses often explored Stephen’s viewpoint, and the gentle humour present in his concerns about the more ordinary aspects of daily life such as School and tea. Most responses acknowledged the sinister implications of the ‘bayonet’. Less developed responses tended to work through the extract in order, explain its content and / or neglect to focus on Frayn’s use of humour.

Question 14

Only a few responses to this question were seen. There was often an acknowledgement of the enigmatic nature of Mrs Hayward’s character, the unhappiness in her marriage and her husband’s abusive treatment of her, and also her compassion seen in the way she deals with Stephen. Fewer responses commented on the lengths she goes to save her lover. Some more developed responses avoided a list of character traits and actions and instead focused on a more detailed exploration of key moments, such as the meeting in the hiding place with Stephen where the pressure she is clearly under and her vulnerability are brought to the fore.

SUSAN HILL: *I’m the King of the Castle*

Question 15

The most accomplished responses explored Hill’s use of structure in creating suspense in the printed extract, identifying clear moments of change and progression, culminating in the sudden and dramatic appearance of Hooper at the end of the extract. These candidates had the confidence to select material judiciously and explore the detail of the writing, whereas less developed responses charted the level of suspense using a descriptive, almost line-by-line approach. Most answers commented on the depiction of Kingshaw’s reactions to the initially unidentified sound and were clear about the immediate context: Kingshaw has run away from Warings (and Hooper) and is seeking refuge in Hang Wood. There was some commentary on Hill’s use of short sentences in building suspense, though too often actual examples were not provided and the link between ‘short, snappy sentences’ and suspense was left to the Examiner to work out.

Question 16

Most candidates offered an undiluted portrait of a wicked woman, though a minority of responses offered some attempt at balance, usually citing Mrs Kingsley’s status as a widow obliged to search for a potential husband. Candidates were free to take whatever line they wanted, though it was important that assertions made were substantiated by means of reference to the text. Most answers reflected on Mrs Kingsley’s inadequacy as a mother, the unfairness of some of her rebukes to her son, and her failure ever to listen to what he has to say. Beyond the pale, thought many, was her maternal comforting of the monstrous Hooper following the suicide of her son. Although many were able to enumerate the flaws in her character, few were able to select and analyse key aspects of Hill’s writing in generating readers’ responses to the character.

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 17

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make meaningful comment.

Question 18

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make meaningful comment.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Question 19

The most successful responses provided convincing critical explorations of the ways in Stevenson conveys both Lanyon's despair and Utterson's confusion. These responses noted Utterson's shock on seeing the physical decline of his close friend Lanyon, and were alert to the more melodramatic aspects of their dialogue ('...spare me any allusion to one whom I regard as dead'). Less developed responses neglected to comment on this moment's significance within the wider novella and thus found it difficult to give full reasons why sympathy was due to either character. Some responses listed features of language and / or structure without developing or sustaining a critical response; a detached overview was absent from such responses. Some candidates took refuge in very general and unproductive assertions about context (e.g. gentlemen in those days did not pry into other gentlemen's business), rather than a detailed analysis of Stevenson's writing.

Question 20

The few candidates who responded to this question made relevant selections from the text of moments they found 'particularly shocking'. Inevitably popular choices were the trampling of the young girl and Carew's murder. Less confident answers simply re-told the story of each episode whereas more developed responses were able to explore the effects created by the writing. The most accomplished responses demonstrated excellent recall of detail (and of concise direct quotation) from these key moments. Some of these responses analysed narrative viewpoint, in particular, the effect of recalling these two incidents from the perspective, respectively, of Enfield and the maid. Some candidates opted to write about wider social (upper class gentlemen, duality) and literary contexts (the Gothic) rather than address the question directly. These were generally context points for their own sake rather than contextual points that illuminated a reading of the actual text in addressing the question set.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21: *Billennium*

Candidates answering on this text overwhelmingly chose this question. Most responses commented on the dimensions of the cubicle, the flimsiness of the building, the overcrowding, and the noise. Higher achieving responses wrote about the implications of the lack of privacy on the freedom and independence of the individuals in this dystopian society. The most accomplished responses explored the effect of the restrictions on characters and friendships, and the implications that the restrictions will increase in the future. These responses also provided detailed explorations of Ballard's presentation of the setting and linked these to the key words of the question: 'such a depressing opening to the story'. The least developed responses worked through the extract sometimes using much quotation but without close analysis of textual detail.

Question 22: *Of White Hairs and Cricket*

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/22
Drama 22

Key messages

- Candidates who took time to read the question carefully and responded to its demands wrote the most successful answers
- Most responses would have been improved by more detailed knowledge of the text and an ability to use direct quotations from it
- Convincing answers showed awareness of the dramatist's methods, effects and intentions
- Higher achieving candidates viewed the text from an audience perspective and understood the role of stage directions
- The most successful responses avoided narrative and lengthy contextualisation.

General comments

Many candidates wrote very successfully about characterisation, theme, structure and ideas and showed great enthusiasm and independence of thought. In the main, the plays had clearly been enjoyed and discussed in detail. The route to improvement in examination performance for most candidates would be in developing more thorough and detailed textual knowledge. This would enable candidates to have the confidence to respond to questions they had not necessarily rehearsed prior to the examination, and to explore their own ideas and responses. It would also enable them to make close reference to the text in support of these ideas. Candidates who avoided simplistic labelling of ideas in the texts such as 'Capitalist / Socialist' in *An Inspector Calls* and 'The American Dream' in *All My Sons* generally wrote more interesting answers. Less successful answers often expressed only a partial understanding or sometimes a complete misunderstanding of these terms, and used them unhelpfully.

Practice in close reading of the text is necessary to respond adequately to passage-based questions. An awareness of the context within the play as a whole, without explaining it at length, an understanding of what is being said in the passage and how it is being said, likely audience response, and the significance of the scene and the author's aims all need to be considered in preparation for the examination.

Strong responses in this series were not limited to description or explanation of the passage, but gave an analysis of its impact and effects. They briefly put the passage into context and used numerous brief, well-integrated quotations, commenting on their effect in the passage.

In answering the discursive questions, candidates would benefit from greater ease in referring closely to the text. Often sound and developed arguments were restricted by lack of close textual reference in support.

The strongest responses understood terms of the genre such as 'suspense' and 'dramatic irony', used a wide range of material, avoided using the passage from the previous question in the answer and resisted re-telling the narrative. There were a few responses this session, especially on *The Merchant of Venice*, where candidates thought the discursive question related to the passage set for the passage question. Candidates need to be clear that the two are entirely separate.

Candidates who paid attention to key terms in the question, and had thought about how an audience sitting in a theatre would be likely to think and feel at given moments in the play fared well.

The most useful introductions were those which focused attention immediately on the question and avoided lengthy context-setting or giving historical background information. The time spent writing conclusions which merely reiterated points already made could have been better used to give a wider range of ideas or more detailed analysis.

Comments on specific questions

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

Question 1

Candidates tackled this question either as an audience member who was as yet unaware of Joe's guilt, or with an overview of the play as a whole. Either approach was acceptable and answers were generally competent and relevant. Strong responses explored how Joe is 'being smart' here, aiming to disarm George and manipulate him into thinking that he cares about Steve. The contradictory strand of the dialogue where he piles guilt onto Steve and doubt onto George drew comment from most candidates. Joe's hypocrisy and the irony of his comments on accepting blame were fully appreciated in sound responses. The best answers gave the personal response the question required, showed a keen awareness of the ironies, and supported points fully from the passage. Less successful answers often selected key points but did not support them from the passage, or did not focus firmly on the question of how Miller's portrayal made them feel about Joe. There were a few responses which took Joe's words at face value or which misunderstood the context.

Question 2

Most candidates understood that the relationship between Kate and Ann played a central and major part in the play. The strongest answers explored this in dramatic terms rather than narrating the course of their relationship. The tensions between Ann and Kate caused by Ann's arrival, her contrasting response to Larry's disappearance, her relationship with Chris and George's intervention were explored, along with Ann's climactic revelation of Larry's letter and its powerfully dramatic consequences. An inability to refer closely to any of these powerful moments prevented many answers from achieving high marks. Several responses assumed that Ann's knowledge of the letter meant she thought Joe was guilty all along, whereas the play makes it clear that she, like George, until recently accepted their father's guilt.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

Many candidates showed an awareness of the drama created by Priestley's suggestion that the Inspector has foreknowledge of Mrs Birling's involvement, the Inspector's emotive presentation of Eva's plight, Sheila's forceful response, and the conflict created between family members. The most assured answers explored Mrs Birling's snobbery and evasiveness, the Inspector's tone, his blunt and persistent questioning, and the powerful dramatic irony of Sybil Birling not realising that she is talking about her own son. Less successful answers seemed unaware of the exact context, and were diverted into discussing the 'responsibility' theme rather than focussing sharply on the drama of this moment. Some spent too much time on how Mrs Birling has responded to the Inspector earlier in the play and, while this made a relevant point about contrast, it meant that the passage was often not explored in sufficient detail.

Question 4

This question produced a wide variety of responses, some of which seemed to have a far kinder view of Gerald than Priestley had perhaps intended. The most focussed responses selected material which reflected his role in the play. They balanced Gerald's kindness to Eva and regret over his treatment of her with his deception of Sheila, and his ultimate siding with the older generation in denial of responsibility. Confident answers supported their views with comment on how Gerald sides with Birling against the factory workers, hopes that his affair with Eva/ Daisy will not be revealed, and assumes that Sheila will still want to marry him at the end of the play. Some answers spent too long establishing his status or conveyed a strong response to him without supporting this by close textual reference. Less successful responses tended to make sweeping assertions, ignoring his genuine care for Eva/Daisy, for example, or conversely omitting any reference to his disloyalty and deceit. Insightful answers recognised that there is some complexity in the portrayal.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 5

The majority of candidates made central comments on Shylock's intransigence, and Antonio's fatalism and love for Bassanio. Developed responses supported this by looking at Shylock's merciless stance, his unwillingness to speak to Antonio, his mockery of the fool who lends out money gratis, his repetitive language, and the undertones of religious conflict. They interpreted Antonio's tone as desperate and pleading rather than polite and regretful, and saw that he had given up and had no hope that the law would save him. Less sharply focussed answers mistook the context as the trial scene and asserted that Antonio regrets what he has done to Shylock in the past (a misunderstanding of: '*I oft have delivered from his forfeitures/Many that have at times made moan to me*'). Such responses spent too much time explaining the narrative context, or wrote little about Antonio and too much about Shylock's hatred of Antonio and the extent to which it is justified, with evidence from earlier in the play. Focus on the passage itself and exploration of Antonio's realism about the law and the state to which he has been reduced by his 'griefs and losses' were often the hallmark of a successful response.

Question 6

The most confident responses to this question chose their moments carefully and referred to them closely. The various casket choosing scenes and the trial were the most popular and successful selection, though some made a good case for Jessica's elopement or, to a lesser degree, the ring scenes. Developed answers commented on how the suspense was created, took the perspective of an audience, and referred closely to their chosen moments. Although most candidates chose effectively, their exploration of the moments and use of textual support could have been considerably improved. Many lost valuable time writing out the inscriptions on the three caskets, presumably because they had learned them, but made no response to the suspense. A few comments on Portia's 'quality of mercy' speech, her agreeing that the bond is valid and Shylock's sharpening his blade and preparing his scales, for example, would have made many inadequate answers perfectly competent.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Effective answers looked both at the striking nature of the situation, an anointed King in disguise speaking to common soldiers, and the striking language of Williams' speech about war and its consequences. For example: '*The use of the word 'raw' (in 'rawly left') creates a sense that the subject for their children is a painful one, similar to that of a raw wound*'. There was some exploration of the ideas of humanity of kings and the extent to which the foot soldiers share the guilt of a dishonourable cause. The dramatic irony of the men unknowingly criticising the King was appreciated. Less successful answers focussed almost exclusively on the situation without exploring the passage in sufficient detail.

Question 8

The majority of candidates who answered this question could see that the English lesson scene and Henry's wooing of Katherine were entertaining, but could not give sufficient detail from the scenes to prove their point. Many answers concentrated solely on the fact that Katherine's betrothal to Henry was political and that she was a woman in a largely male dominated cast. Neither of these points went very far in helping them to answer the question.

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 9

This question was generally answered with some competence. Candidates commented on the importance of the visual representation of the town in the set, the introduction of the main themes of the play through Howard and Melinda, and the intrigue caused by Rachel's furtive arrival at the jail. Candidates seemed well-prepared to discuss the functions of an opening to a play and understood what was required of them. As always, those who supported their points fully from the passage fared better than those who did not.

Question 10

Most candidates chose to take a thematic view, and explored how Brady's downfall meant an end to fundamentalism and hope for more freedom of thought. The 'Golden Dancer' symbol was cited as representing Brady, who seemed everything on the outside but on the inside proved to be broken and hollow. There was, therefore, a stronger focus on 'significant' than 'dramatic'. Some candidates looked in detail at how Drummond demolished Brady in the court, and many commented on his followers deserting him and the embarrassing reciting of his presidential speech. A balanced concentration on drama as well as theme would have improved several responses.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 2010/23
Drama 23

Key messages

- Close attention to the detail of the set text is the primary characteristic of successful answers, and the careful use of brief, apt and well-integrated quotation is the key component of this close attention
- The most accomplished answers to extract-based questions start by quickly locating the extract in the context of the whole play, and then develop by concentrating on the detail of the printed extract
- The highest achieving candidates see the texts as scripts for performance and try to visualise the onstage action
- Candidates need to focus more clearly on the language of the dialogue. Excessive concentration on the wording of stage directions or the writer's use of punctuation is generally unhelpful.

General comments

The best introductory paragraphs focus clearly on the terms of the question and begin to develop specific ideas, avoiding unhelpful generalisations, biographical details or lists of generic techniques. Sweeping comments on the writer's use of "dialogue, stage directions, punctuation...", or even just "language", hamper swift engagement with the selected question and text.

The best approach to extract-based questions is to establish the dramatic context for the prescribed passage in terms of the concerns of the characters on stage and the audience's overview of the evolving action at this point in the play, and then devote the bulk of the answer to discussing, quoting from and commenting on the printed extract itself.

The most effective answers to discursive questions stay anchored to the terms of the question throughout and select detailed and specific support for their arguments. In questions demanding the selection of particular "moments" (**Questions 2 and 8**), a sharp focus on the detail of a clearly-defined incident or specific section of dialogue is the key to success.

The tendency to use labels ("capitalist / socialist... the American Dream ...social responsibility ...foreshadowing...cliff-hanger...dramatic irony...") as if they speak for themselves and require no further explanation or exemplification restricted the development of some promising ideas. Similarly, some formulaic feature-logging approaches whereby candidates worked through a checklist of generic headings ("dialogue...stage directions...punctuation...language features...") tended to distance them from the dramatic impact of their selected play, and to convey little sense of them enjoying a theatrical experience. Lengthy digressions about the responses of different audiences (Elizabethan, Post-WW2...) also tended to obscure the candidate's own response, at times.

Comments on specific questions

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

Question 1

There were many fine answers to this very popular question. Candidates often engaged closely with the complex and intense feelings of both characters, and clearly identified Chris's determination to marry Annie and perhaps to leave the business as the source of dramatic conflict not only in this scene, but also in scenes to come. Chris's uncharacteristic anger, frustration and decisiveness, and Keller's shock and

desperation were often thoughtfully handled, with some close attention to the escalating tensions conveyed through Keller's anxious questioning and movements. The most accomplished answers avoided simplification and suggested that Keller is not just acting as a loyal husband and devoted father in this scene, but is also intent on self-preservation and concealing his own guilt in conspiring with Kate in the delusion that Larry is still alive. The intensity of Keller's feelings in the gesture of putting "a fist up to CHRIS's jaw" was often sensitively handled, though the extent of the physical violence involved was occasionally exaggerated. The ironic resonance of Keller's repeated words to his son about the business, "for you", was also thoughtfully picked up, and related to the climactic scene at the end of Act Two when Keller's guilt is finally revealed to Chris. Some candidates thought that Keller is referring to Annie, rather than Kate, when he says "She thinks he's coming back" and others were uncertain about the context and insisted that the audience is already convinced of Keller's guilt. Some were so intent on logging the number of interruptions, questions, ellipses...that they remained detached from the evolving action and the sources of conflict. Others insisted that Annie is Larry's wife.

Question 2

There was a range of convincingly "disturbing" moments provided by the candidates. The most popular and successful selections included Sue's acerbic conversation with Annie, Keller's barefaced manipulation of George, Kate's reading of Larry's letter to Annie, the confrontation between Keller and Chris after the revelation of Keller's guilt, and the impact of Keller's suicide at the end of the play. The most confident candidates were able to balance their time thoughtfully between the two clearly-defined moments, explore the specific detail and context for each moment, and focus explicitly on the disturbing elements. Less successful candidates chose moments which merged into each other, or became so sprawling that they appeared to occupy a whole Act and led to a rather generalised discussion as a result. Some candidates were distracted by thematic concerns, most notably "social responsibility", as if they were answering a different question.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

The power of the play's final scene was convincingly conveyed by many candidates in response to this very popular question. The contrasting reactions to the revelation of the "hoax" (and particularly the tension between Sheila and Mr Birling) were often explored in detail, and there was much thoughtful speculation about the timing and significance of the phone call, and its impact on both the characters and the audience. The most confident candidates traced not only the detail of the characters' contrasting reactions, but also the rapid shifts in mood, the impact of the sharp ring of the telephone (often linking this to the sharp ring of the doorbell in Act One), and the suspense as we hear one side of the telephone conversation and await Mr Birling's explanation. Less successful candidates tended to dive into the extract without suggesting an understanding of Gerald's call to the Infirmary (or Birling's to Colonel Roberts) and were therefore unable to place Birling's tone of triumph and relief in any kind of context; or were lured away from the dramatic impact of the scene on an audience by lengthy thematic discussions of social responsibility, the generational divide, capitalism versus socialism and so on. Answers tended to be overly dominated by Mr Birling or Sheila, as if they are the only two characters on stage, and the effect of Gerald's untimely production of the engagement ring seldom received attention. Some candidates were uncertain about what exactly "frightens" Sheila and Eric.

Question 4

Answers to this popular question were notable for their wide-ranging textual knowledge and the strength of the personal response to the Birlings. The best avoided the drift into lengthy narrative accounts of the culpability of each family member in the story of Eva Smith / Daisy Renton, and engaged fully with the Birlings "as a family" by exploring their dysfunctional relationships with each other. The portrayal of Mr Birling as the kind of father in whom his son is unable to confide – and who is more interested in business relationships than his daughter's happiness – was often thoughtfully explored. Similarly Mrs Birling's foolish attempts to protect Sheila from the reality of the outside world, her inability to recognise Eric's problem with drink and even her responsibility for the death of her own grandchild, were often intelligently cited as evidence of parental failings, alongside some well selected evidence of tensions between husband and wife, and, initially, between brother and sister. Many candidates responded very strongly and personally to the self-centred materialism of the family, the lack of understanding and affection between the parents and children, and the emergence of their contrasting values by the end of the play. Less successful candidates missed the family focus of the question and provided four individual character studies, or an answer entirely devoted to the themes of social responsibility and the generational divide.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 5

This was probably the most popular question across the three components, and many candidates managed the difficult feat of balancing their attention to the dramatic context and evolving situation with very close attention to the detail of the printed extract and features of the verse. The highest achieving candidates were aware of our foreknowledge of Antonio's perilous situation, so that we await the impact of his letter on Bassanio and on the celebratory mood of the lovers in Belmont. There was much intelligent exploration of the building of suspense through Salerio's cryptic responses to Bassanio and Gratiano, through Portia's concerned description of Bassanio's loss of colour and morbid speculation, through Bassanio's desperate questioning, and through the delay in revealing the full contents of the letter. The candidates' commentary on Bassanio's dramatic personification of the paper and on Salerio's portrayal of Shylock's inhuman malevolence was often sensitive and well developed. Most candidates fully grasped the seriousness of Antonio's predicament. Some found difficulty in understanding the exact nature of Bassanio's "confession" to Portia, suggesting that he had boasted of his vast riches in wooing her, or that he is now pleading for her help, and others thought they were already married at this point. Portia's touching concern for Bassanio and willingness to share his difficulties tended to be overlooked. The bond was occasionally characterised as a wager, and, at times, there was a tendency to drift from the detail of the extract and to launch into unhelpful discussions of the nature of Antonio's feelings for Bassanio or of anti-semitism, though the need for Gratiano to urge Nerissa to welcome Jessica was rarely addressed.

Question 6

There were a few outstanding answers to this question which focused on the idea of "enjoyment", and developed a clear and detailed view of the effect of contrast between the two locations. Venice was often seen as the serious world of business, dominated by men and beset by conflict and suspicion, with Belmont as the fairytale world of romance, music, comedy and happy resolutions. More subtle answers moved this argument on to suggest overlap in the portrayal of repressive fathers and in the evidence of racism and deception in both locations. However, some candidates lost contact with the question and simply recounted what happens in each location or drifted so far away from the detail of the text that the answers resembled generalised travel or historical guides to canals, trade and ghettos, rather than a close reading of the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most candidates were able to respond in some way to the power and violence of Henry's language, and the most accomplished answers contained much close attention to features like the barbarity of the imagery, the insistent questioning which places responsibility on the Governor of Harfleur, the biblical allusions, and the final rhyming couplet. A variety of impressions of Henry's determined leadership were suggested but the highest achieving candidates, whilst aware of his ruthlessness elsewhere in the play, saw his vicious threats as strategic bluffs designed to avoid bloodshed, and that the subtle purpose of his rhetorical flourishes was to manipulate the Governor. Less confident candidates tended to take his words at face value and to suggest that he was some kind of Herod-figure, personally intent on violating and murdering the innocents of Harfleur, rather than a leader trying to contain the worst instincts of his men.

Question 8

This question was rarely attempted, but several answers suggested genuine engagement with the play. The most popular and successful selections tended to be the scenes involving Katherine or the Eastcheap crew, though the "tennis balls" moment also received some thoughtful attention. The most confident candidates were able to identify clearly-defined moments and refer in detail to entertaining features, including some impressively specific comments on language. Some found "entertaining" to be rather an elusive term and appeared to be shoe-horning prepared material on the role of the Chorus or the impact of Henry's rhetoric in key speeches (including, occasionally, the printed passage for **Question 7**) into their answers. Nevertheless, most candidates managed to demonstrate their enjoyment of the play and to convey broadly entertaining effects.

J LAWRENCE and R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 9

This text has attracted a small but enthusiastic following, and the majority of these candidates tackled this climactic courtroom scene. The highest achieving candidates fully understood the pivotal nature of this moment and the power shift from Brady to Drummond, and looked in detail at the impact of this confrontation between the play's two heavyweights, both on the audience within the courtroom and the broader theatre audience. As with all extract-based questions, an awareness of context was a key component of successful answers and the candidates who could focus on Brady's growing hesitancy and desperation in relation to the pomposity and confidence he has displayed hitherto, or rejoice in the triumph of Drummond's rational enquiries about the age of the Earth after the rejection by the court of all expert testimony on evolution, produced highly effective answers. The increasing pace of Drummond's questions, the laughter in the courtroom, the evidence of Brady's discomfiture, and Davenport's panicky attempt to intervene were often addressed as key features of the scene's effect. Less confident candidates tended to take the dramatic context and the subject matter of the dialogue as read, and to remain detached from the characters or the scene as a theatrical experience by concentrating exclusively on the stage directions or the number of question marks.

Question 10

This question was a minority choice but most candidates fully understood the courageous nature of Bert's stand, and the central function of his case in providing the battleground for competing ideologies. The most insightful candidates looked in some detail at the rounded portrayal of Bert as heroic but also as a shy, modest, fearful character, thrust into reluctant action by his belief in the freedom of thought and his concern for others, most notably Rachel and Tommy Stebbins. Less confident candidates tended to overlook his ordinariness and human frailties, and to characterise him as simply heroic. Others drifted away from the question and tended to concentrate exclusively on what Bert stands for and thematic concerns, so that the answers became dominated by explorations of the freedom of thought in collision with narrow-minded bigotry, or by the character of Drummond rather than Cates.