

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/01
Prose and Poetry

Key messages

- Stronger responses always include effective analysis of language, particularly in the poetry and passage-based prose questions.
- Detailed support from the text, either by quotations or well-chosen references, is essential in all questions.
- Knowledge of the whole text is essential in the prose questions.
- Responses must answer the specific question set.
- Responses should range across the whole extract in passage-based questions.
- Candidates need to present a developed and well-structured response to the question.

General comments

There was again a noticeable improvement in the standard of some of the responses. The most heartening aspect of this was the genuine engagement with the texts displayed by many of the candidates. Many students do continue to find it difficult to express their ideas coherently and to frame a developed and analytical response, particularly about the poems; this was a common weakness, but there was no doubting their enjoyment of poetry and the encouraging attempts to discuss it in more than just a literal way. There was a fairly even spread of answers across all four poems, the strongest this session being *Bonsai* and *The Telephone Call*. Personal response is welcomed, but with the proviso that it needs to be rooted in the text; assertions must be supported by textual reference and not lose focus on the text and/or question.

This also applies to the prose questions, of course, where directly addressing the question was often the discriminator and one of the keys to obtaining higher marks. The overwhelming 'favourite', unsurprisingly, was the inviting passage from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, though a good number of responses also came from *Fahrenheit 451*. Almost all candidates chose the passage-based option for each text.

However, there were still a number of students who answered (many) more than one question from each section, often the passage-based question for every text. Invariably, these wrote one sentence or a short paragraph for each response, usually demonstrating some knowledge and understanding, but these were so brief that very few marks could be awarded. Candidates must be advised that this is always a very poor strategy; marks are only ever given for one text from each section and, as such, one very limited response cannot lead to success in this paper. Higher marks can only be achieved by presenting a detailed and developed response which answers the question. Indeed, the most common weakness across the paper is brevity. Many candidates make a really promising beginning, with two or three relevant points, clearly explained and also supported by the text, but then fail to take things further. Students should be helped to develop their points and also consider the wide range of ideas available for analysis and discussion in each passage and essay.

Focus on language remains the single most important discriminator between the mark bands and is still the area in which many candidates struggle. For language points, candidates need to be reminded to look at specific words and phrases, selecting pertinent words or short quotations. This is covered in the mark scheme by 'the way the writer achieves effects'. However, it is not sufficient just to identify figures of speech, for example, without also commenting on how and why these are appropriate or effective. Knowing the

terminology of literary criticism without being able to apply it sensibly and effectively will not help the students to present a successful response.

At the moment, many responses demonstrate knowledge but fall into the 'reference to the text' category, which tends to cover narrative, more general assertions about the text or longer quotations covering several lines of poetry or prose. These have their place in an answer, but candidates who only select these lengthier references without also considering specific language effects can only achieve marks in the lower bands. The distinction between the two is crucial.

There were a number of responses which suggested that candidates were seeing the poem or passage for the first time on the exam paper. This particularly applied to the poetry section where some elementary errors of interpretation were evident: not knowing that Jane and Dick are characters in a reading book or that a bonsai is a small, indoor tree. For the prose texts, a lack of any understanding of Montag's situation or who Frankie is, for example, suggested that the text had not been studied or even read prior to the exam.

There is now a very useful booklet, '*Example Candidate Responses*', which is available in the Teacher Support section of the Cambridge International website; this includes a number of responses from both poetry and prose sections across the range of bands. There is a commentary which explains the strengths and weaknesses of each answer; these exemplify the general points made above and teachers are strongly recommended to use this resource. To help further, some brief exemplar student responses have been added to the comments on the poetry questions below.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: POETRY

Question 1

Billy Collins: First Reader

The interpretation of individual lines and phrases was sometimes successful, but few candidates attempted to consider the overall meaning of the poem. On a literal level, candidates mentioned the description of Jane and Dick but then struggled to make any comment on how reading about these characters progressed to the 'waiting ... huddle' of Heathcliff, Pip et al. Weaker responses recognised that the narrator had moved on to 'harder' books by the end of the poem, that looking at pictures and turning pages had evolved into genuine reading. However, very few were able to articulate the sense of wonder and enthusiasm created by the 'First Reader', the use of colour, the multitude of nostalgic memories that these first books stirred in the poet. Some were aware that the sense of innocent enjoyment of early books gave way to the more demanding and functional, perhaps even unwelcome, requirement of reading 'educational' books in the regimented classroom as we mature. Surprisingly, students did not seem to consider discussing the stereotypical family life as shown in the 'Dick and Jane' books compared to the present day; this would have made a rewarding section linking personal response to the text.

Two examples of candidates' effective comments:

- '*I can see them standing politely on the wide pages*' suggests that the characters, Dick and Jane, were being patient with him trying to read for the first time. This creates a timid, uncertain tone to portray the feeling of beginning to read.'
- 'By describing what the children looked like, '*a blue jumper*' and '*crayon-brown hair*', it illustrates that the narrator was captivated by the first books and enjoyed reading about what they were doing, '*playing with a ball or exploring the cosmos*'. Reading is the spark which lit his imagination so that he was hooked by reading as a small kid.'

Question 2

Billy Collins: Bonsai

Stronger responses recognised the rather bizarre nature of the bonsai tree, and its strange effect on the way the whole room appears. Many candidates correctly picked out the phrases '*out of whack*' and '*dilates and bloats*' as illustrative of this, but few were able to make any meaningful comment on these words. Some better responses considered the idea of changing perspective, which is central to the poem, but most just picked out some of the 'easier' comparisons to show how the small tree makes other objects appear larger; the button and wheel, matches and raft, coffee cup and cistern were often quoted in their entirety without trying to explain why these metaphors were particularly apt or unusual. Stronger answers commented on the power exerted by the single bonsai as surprising and awe-inspiring; the ability to have its own weather, which is '*fierce*', in contrast to the '*calm tropics*' which seems to be the atmosphere in the room around it. Again, slightly candidates mentioned how the bonsai inspired the poet's imagination and sense of wonder at the power of the tiny tree.

Two examples of candidates' effective comments:

- '*cuts everything down to size*' explains that the bonsai is stronger than the other objects in the room, with a sense of control from a powerful individual.'
- '*out of whack*' introduces a sort of tension between the speaker's perspective and reality.'

Question 3

Edward Thomas: Rain

This was a poem which raised issues of interpretation for many candidates, particularly if, as it sometimes appeared, they had not studied it in depth beforehand. Better answers understood that the narrator was in the context of war, having lost many of his comrades and expecting his own death, although this was not essential for a good answer. Those that had this background knowledge were at an advantage as it made sense of the narrator's compelling thoughts of isolation and death, and explained the underlying reasons for his depressive state. There were commendable attempts to explain this in other ways, some more convincing than others. Most responses were able to say that he felt alone and often cited the repetition of the word '*solitude*', or variations on this, as evidence. Many attempted to discuss the idea that the rain was also seen as a means of purifying, of cleansing him of his sins, though a few took the literal interpretation that rain is useful for washing away dirt. The idea of hoping that none of his loved ones was also suffering was also a popular remark, but the '*broken reeds*' metaphor was largely ignored. Most candidates struggled with the final part of the poem, often because they broke up the final four lines into smaller phrases without looking at them in their entirety as a statement about his longing for death.

Two examples of candidates' effective comments:

- '*helpless among the living and the dead*' shows how the narrator is speaking about the war and how powerless and insignificant he is in the bigger picture. He is just one of the living or one of the dead, it doesn't seem to matter which.'
- 'Thomas uses the word '*wild*' to describe the rain to portray that it seems alive, that it cannot be tamed or fully understood.'

Question 4

Fleur Adcock: The Telephone Call

Responses to this poem were characterised by a strong sense of personal engagement. Many candidates found it easy to empathise with the narrator's position and thereby understand her extremes of emotion, including excitement, disbelief, doubt and confusion. Most correctly identified the points in the poem where emotions changed, but few went beyond this to explore language or to answer the question explicitly. For example, most responses referred to the '*flying saucer*' simile and perhaps said that it gave the reader an insight into how the narrator felt about winning. Candidates seem to think that this is sufficient comment, but they might be helped to develop the point by explaining exactly what the feeling is and how the simile enables us to understand this better. Some candidates offered some analysis; comments included that it

shows that she was 'dizzy' or that flying saucers only occur in fiction and so the news of the prize is unbelievable. Although brief, these are good comments and lift the response considerably. Many also picked out the description of the physical effects of hearing the news, and commented on how it enables the reader to relate to the character as we are all familiar with these sensory effects. In terms of answering the question, one candidate perceptively recognised that making the poem vivid entails 'putting the reader into the story', but few went beyond this comment to explore how this was achieved. Very few, disappointingly, spent any time considering the 'message' of the poem, perhaps that in life experiences are more important than financial gain, or that our 'something for nothing' culture is to be regretted.

Two examples of candidates' effective comments:

- 'Suspense was created right from the first line with *'Are you sitting down?'* which suggests that something exciting is about to happen. They then immediately talk about winning *the top prize*' which gives the reader a vivid feeling of victory in some way as most prizes have to be earned.'
- 'The poem finishes with *'And the line went dead.'*, which is a great and vivid way to end as it says that the narrator's hopes went dead as well as the phone.'

Section B: PROSE

Ray Bradbury: *Fahrenheit 451*

Question 5

This new text on the paper proved to be quite popular, and first impressions are that candidates are both enjoying it and engaging with Bradbury's vision of the future and Montag's dilemmas. Most responses understood that this moment is a turning point for Montag as he questions the received wisdom given to him by the Government and its representative, Beatty. Candidates pointed out the disturbing fate of the man taken to the asylum, simply for owning books, and how significant it is that Montag recognises that he wasn't insane. Most picked up the drama of Montag having books hidden behind the ventilator grille and Beatty's menacing question, clearly a warning to him. Some commented on Montag 'becoming' Clarisse and it was heartening to see how many saw the significance behind Montag's use of the *'Once upon a time...'* phrase. At this point in the passage there was still a great deal of drama and useful material to come but, as noted in the 'General Comments' section, candidates tend to run out of steam after making two or three points, and many did not continue to develop their response and add further detail from the passage.

In this way, many missed out on any analysis of the 'Rules' and the lie that the first fireman was Benjamin Franklin. The extreme drama of the alarm bell at just the right moment to 'save' Montag was also almost invariably ignored and, most surprisingly, the fact that the Hound responded so threateningly to Montag rarely featured in responses. However, many did comment on the fact that Montag forgetting his helmet was the first sign that his allegiance to being a fireman was crumbling. The final line of the passage with the *'wind hammering'*, the *'siren scream'* and their *'mighty metal thunder'* provided a plethora of material for language analysis but was not picked up on by candidates.

Question 6

Too few responses received for meaningful comment.

Zora Neale Hurston: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Questions 7 and 8

Too few responses received for meaningful comment. However, many of this small number confused the two questions, appearing to think that the 'striking impressions of Nanny' in **Question 8** were to be found in the passage, failing to distinguish her from Janie. This was evidence, as noted in the General Comments, that the text had not been read. Candidates also need to be instructed that the two questions on each text will not overlap.

Harper Lee: To Kill a Mockingbird

Question 9

This was overwhelmingly the most popular question in this section, and generally there were a good standard of responses, some of them excellent. There was evidence here that candidates are learning to focus more securely on the particular passage given and also answer the specific question set. The passage invited candidates to comment on how this moment was 'moving' and, quite rightly, responses focused on Boo and Scout and how they have both changed from earlier in the novel. Many commented on Boo's movements and how he was more like a child than a man; this was often developed by showing how the shy and kind reality of the man was so surprisingly different from the imagined 'monster'. Answers also showed how Scout had matured into a sensitive girl and, in particular, how she spoke to him and also how she was not prepared to let Boo be further maligned; some responses misunderstood how Scout manipulated their walk home in order to enable Boo to keep his dignity, thinking that Boo was being kind and gentlemanly to Scout, but generally there was a good understanding of the situation. One overall weakness was that some candidates spent too long describing the circumstances leading up to Boo's visit to the Finch house and why he was previously viewed so negatively by the town. Although this demonstrated knowledge of the text, the bulk of any response must focus on the passage rather than on narration of its context.

Candidates also focused, quite correctly, on the gifts Boo had left for them which could now never be reciprocated. Comment on language in the extract was less secure overall and this part of the passage would have been a source for some good examples: the short, simple sentence '*I never saw him again.*' makes a considerable impact, denying Scout (and the reader) the stereotypical 'happy ending', and the final statement, '*it made me sad*', is also moving, understating as it does Scout's belated understanding of Boo and his motives. Surprisingly few candidates selected the impact of '*our lives*', coming at the end of the list, even though it was overwhelmingly the most important 'gift' Boo gave them.

Question 10

There were few responses to this question; those that did attempt it largely used the **Question 9** extract as the sole source of material and so, with such limited scope, were unlikely to achieve anything other than the lower bands. The comment from **Questions 7 and 8** also applies here: candidates must be advised never to conflate the two questions on any text; they should always be treated entirely separately. A small number of responses made a better attempt at the question, with some mention of racism and varying status in the town, for example, but others either relied on saying that neighbours were 'nice' as they sent gifts to each other or that the children had a pleasant time playing different games, so Maycomb is a 'good' place to live. These tended to fall into the 'makes a few straightforward comments' category and, as such, could only be awarded low marks.

Carson McCullers: The Member of the Wedding

Question 11

A small number of candidates answered this question and they generally showed a sound knowledge of the text and Frankie's situation at this point in the novel. A weakness was that most narrated the extract, drawing attention at times to moments of self-revelation where she had her 'epiphany'. This was mostly in general terms which, although showing understanding, did not look in sufficient detail at the language in the passage. Candidates could usefully have picked out such phrases as '*she knew deep in her where she would go*', '*her squeezed heart suddenly opened and divided....like two wings*', '*she did not need to wonder and puzzle any more*' and '*after the scared spring and crazy summer, she was no more afraid*'. The focus on the question, on the drama of the moment, was largely implicit in responses rather than explicit; few were able to articulate that the real drama lay in the powerful expression of Frankie's feelings at this turning point for her. Surprisingly, in terms of putting the passage in context, few referred to the inevitable catastrophe facing Frankie after such a momentous and seemingly joyful 'awakening' for her.

Question 12

Too few responses received for meaningful comment.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 13

The responses to this question generally showed an overall understanding of the story and how and why this ending is so satisfying for the reader. Most candidates were able to list the ways in which Poldero behaved so cruelly towards the Phoenix and also understood the crowd's role in encouraging his avarice; all responses expressed satisfaction that they all received their just reward for such selfishness, either prompted by greed or a desire for entertainment, regardless of the suffering caused. There was, as noted before, a lack of development and close focus on the passage, omitting much of the detail and comment on language. Candidates could have usefully considered the contrast between the amoral Poldero and the appealing Phoenix, and what exactly makes us so sympathetic towards the Phoenix in the first place. Responses could consider how it battles cheerfully through the increasingly awful conditions, staying '*civil and amiable*', for example, or how, near its 'end', it is '*staggering...wearily*'. The final, simple, statement that '*everything was burned to ashes, and some thousand people, including Mr Poldero, perished in the blaze*' should be horrifying, but we are now so much on the side of the Phoenix, who will revive, that the idea of humans 'perishing' is indeed satisfying.

Question 14

Too few responses received for meaningful comment.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/02
Drama

Key messages

- The best answers to this paper show an awareness that the text was written to be acted on stage. These answers make a response to features of drama such as stage directions, action, dialogue and audience reaction.
- When answering passage-based questions, candidates need to use quotations from the passage to support their comments. Candidates need to focus on directly addressing the question asked, and on making a response to the writing of the passage.
- Candidates often find it useful to state briefly the context of the passage at the start of their answer, because they are then more able to see the significance of that particular passage within the text as a whole. This helps them to focus their answers on what is important about that passage.
- When answering discursive questions, candidates need to address the whole question, develop arguments and support their views with quotations or well-selected references to the text.

General comments

The most popular text was *A Raisin in the Sun*, with some strong answers on *Macbeth* and *A View from the Bridge*. The passage-based questions were more frequently answered. Candidates often showed a good knowledge and understanding of the text, and often gave strong personal responses when asked. These personal responses needed to be supported with evidence from the text. In many cases, their engagement with their studied text was clear. This was particularly evident in answers to **Question 1**, where many candidates expressed their outrage at Mr Lindner's attitudes to the Younger family as he tried to persuade them not to move into his community. One candidate conveyed their feelings clearly: "I can empathise with Lindner all day but this is not Lindner's play, this is Walter's family's play. I have spent a great deal of time with Walter's family up until this point and I have formed feelings towards everyone in Walter's family. Just as things were getting better for Walter's family, Lindner shows up acting the way he is acting. Of course I would be agitated with Lindner." Indeed.

The majority of candidates followed the rubric and answered one question. There were several examples of candidates who used the passage for the first question to answer the second question. It was difficult for these answers to move beyond the lower mark bands, because answers to the discursive questions need to use material selected from the whole text, instead of from a short passage. There were also a surprising number of scripts in which candidates had attempted to answer all of the questions. In these cases, the examiner will mark every response, but only one mark will count, the highest mark. Answers to these tended to be very brief and undeveloped, and gained few marks.

There were many good responses to the passage-based questions. Candidates who established the context of the passage briefly in one or two lines at the start of their answers showed a stronger awareness of its significance. Thus when answering on *A Raisin in the Sun*, stronger candidates identified at the start that the passage was from Mr Lindner's visit to the Younger family, when he offered to buy their new house to prevent them, as a black family, moving to Clybourne Park, a white community. This awareness of context informed their whole answer on Mr Lindner, since in the passage he is only pretending to be friendly in order to achieve his ends. When answering on *A View from the Bridge*, an awareness of the context again informs the answer: it is where Eddie's resentment of Rodolfo first becomes physical, Marco demonstrates that he is loyal to Rodolfo and that he is stronger than Eddie. This overview is key to answering the question on the passage as a 'powerful moment in the play'. When answering on *Macbeth*, stronger answers established the context as just after Lady Macbeth received a letter from her husband, telling her about the weird sisters who

prophesied that he would be King. That she immediately begins plotting Duncan's murder is striking – and provides the basis of the answer on the passage as a 'striking introduction to Lady Macbeth'. It is important that candidates do not spend too long narrating parts of the play. They will not gain marks for telling the story. They only need one or two lines to establish the context of a passage. This context often provides the background to a strong answer by helping the candidate to identify what is important in the passage.

One important characteristic of higher achieving answers is the ability to consider the text as drama performed on stage. Candidates who wrote about the effect of the text on the audience, rather than on the reader, were at an advantage because they were already seeing the text from the viewpoint of the audience. Thus, when they wrote about a response to the way the writer uses language, they considered words and phrases as dialogue to be spoken and heard. They also considered features of the genre such as action on stage, interplay between characters, and the audience reaction. The writer's stage directions state what they intend a character to do or what emotion they want the character to show, so they provide additional material.

Candidates who answered the discursive questions often used detailed and developed argument, supported with evidence carefully selected from throughout the play. Some candidates based their answer on the printed passage intended for the previous question. In doing this they severely limited the range of their answer and thus the marks which can be awarded. Discursive questions ask candidates to consider whole-text themes, or to consider the role of characters in the text overall. A sound overview of the text is needed in order to select the most suitable textual material with which to answer the question asked. This material then needs to be analysed in detail to explore the writer's intentions and the audience's responses. Some candidates made assertions which were not backed up with textual reference, and which were sometimes not very convincing or not related to the question.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was the most popular question. Most candidates were able to give a personal response to Lindner and were able to select evidence from the passage to support their comments. Candidates were remarkably sympathetic towards Mr Lindner at first, because he was very nervous. They were often able to support this with reference to Hansberry's writing, where she makes his speech sound halting: "I guess. I mean they, we-". Stronger answers developed their analysis to comment that Mr Lindner was finding it difficult to say what he meant. Candidates who gained the highest marks were able to go beyond the surface meaning to explore the writer's intentions and the audience's responses. Thus, they were able to see that Hansberry deliberately presents Mr Lindner as a "gentle man" to make his racism all the more shocking to the audience. These strong answers often provided the context of the passage at the start, by stating that it is when Lindner tries to prevent the Youngers from moving into his community. Thus they were able to see through Lindner's apparent friendliness in the passage. Some candidates maintained their sympathy and respect for Lindner throughout their answer. They saw him as a 'nice guy' who was 'only doing his job' and that he 'doesn't really want to do it'. Provided they supported this with evidence from the text, they gained credit; Hansberry is setting up Lindner for a fall, and the audience is as uncertain as Walter and Beneatha are as to Lindner's true intentions. However, having studied the play, candidates know Lindner is racist and is simply trying to 'sweet-talk' the Youngers so that they will agree not to move house. Stronger candidates found evidence to support this in stage directions. Thus the stage direction for Mr Lindner which reads: "He looks elsewhere" provided textual support for stronger candidates to comment that Mr Lindner tried to avoid looking at the Youngers because he was not being truthful to them, and that the audience would think that he appeared rather shifty. Beneatha is most suspicious of Lindner. Her action on stage of "tossing a piece of fruit up and down in the air" was interpreted as a sign that she was getting impatient with Mr Lindner's evasions, and that this would encourage an audience to question his motives too. Other parts of the passage selected for comment included how Lindner implies the Youngers are 'problems' when he refers to "special community problems"; how he clearly sees a divide between himself and the Youngers when he refers to them as "you folks" and "you people"; his deliberate flattery of them as "hard working and honest I'm sure" as he softens them up for the blow of telling them they are not wanted in his community; and the irony of him saying "we don't try hard enough in this world to understand the other fellow's problem", when this is exactly what he is doing himself. That his approach is very persuasive is shown by Ruth's encouragement of him as she takes him at face value. Less high achieving candidates often gave a personal response to Lindner, and often seemed to see his duplicity, but without textual reference in support and some response to the writing, their answers were limited to the lower mark bands.

Question 2

Good answers to this question often showed much sympathy for Beneatha. They commented on her family background and the poverty the Youngers live in, often selecting material from early in the play to support the point, illustrating the poor housing where they share a bathroom, and that they have only two bedrooms for the whole family. Beneatha's dreams of being educated are reflected in her speech, which is different from the rest of the family. At one time she wants to become a doctor, which raises issues of attitudes to feminism when Walter challenges this idea. Some candidates criticised Beneatha for being very self-centred and opinionated, while others thought she was searching for a role for herself, as she tried out expensive hobbies like playing guitar, acting, photography, horse riding. She defies Walter's attempts at stereotyping. She declares she doesn't believe in God, but Mama slaps her for this and makes her recant, which led some candidates to sympathise with her. Her behaviour towards George Murchison shows she maintains her moral sense. Joseph Asagai encourages her pride in her African heritage, although she doesn't know much about it. She shows her support for her African roots by having her hair styled naturally instead of straightening it. There is much in the play to suggest that Beneatha has grand ideas, with the strength of character to achieve what she wants in life, but that she has to struggle every step of the way because of her disadvantages at the time of the play: she is black, female and poor. The one event in the play which most candidates mentioned in relation to Beneatha was Walter losing the money for her education when he gave it to Willy for the liquor store. Candidates were united in sympathising with Beneatha for the loss of not just her dreams, but of the purpose of all her hard work studying too. Candidates who created a balanced and developed argument showing some sympathy for Beneatha, supported by evidence gathered from throughout the play, did well on this question. Others gained only a few marks if they limited their response to the passage used for **Question 1**.

Question 3

There were fewer answers to this text. Stronger candidates placed the passage in the context of the play, stating that this is where Eddie's resentment of Rodolfo first becomes physical, and Marco demonstrates that he is loyal to Rodolfo and that he is stronger than Eddie. These candidates had thus already identified what was important in the passage, and focused their answer to the question on a 'powerful moment' on these three areas. They described how Eddie uses the 'front' of teaching Rodolfo to box to show him how strong he is, and also to punch him so hard that it "staggers" Rodolfo. Candidates who were well-focused on the question pointed out that the punch is powerful because it shocks the audience into realising that Eddie is prepared to get physical in his desire to hurt Rodolfo in Catherine's eyes. Some developed their answers to consider that it is also powerful because it elicits reactions from all of the characters. Some candidates went on to analyse the powerful ending of the passage. With his action of lifting the chair, Marco is able to demonstrate his formidable strength, and issue Eddie with both a warning and a threat. The audience don't need to be told in words that Eddie gets the message: they can see the threat on stage as Marco lifts the chair "raised like a weapon over Eddie's head", and they can see Eddie's grin vanishing as he "absorbs" Marco's look of "triumph". Thus the stage is set for the future conflict between these characters. Candidates who were less aware of the text as drama on stage did not comment on the stage directions at the end of the passage, thus missing the most powerful part.

Question 4

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.

Question 5

There were fewer answers to this text. Stronger answers placed the passage in the context of the play, stating that it comes just after Lady Macbeth has received the letter from her husband which tells her about the weird sisters who prophesied that he would be King. That she immediately begins plotting Duncan's murder is striking – and provides the basis of the answer on the passage as a 'striking introduction to Lady Macbeth'. Candidates often selected her attitude to her husband as being striking too – she sees him as being too weak and needing persuasion to act. The strongest answers here were able to select striking words and phrases and comment on their effect. For example, the way Shakespeare describes her calling on the spirits to fill her "from the crown to the toe, top-full Of direst cruelty" is striking because of its emphasis on filling up. The idea is repeated three times in a short space. The effect is to emphasise the sheer amount of cruelty she knows she will need to murder Duncan. As one candidate said, it isn't just any cruelty either; it is described as 'direst', thus emphasising the worst sort there can be. There is much to comment on in Lady Macbeth's use of language here. Some candidates selected her emphasis on her femininity, with her both wishing to rid herself of weak feminine qualities in "unsex me here" and using it in "take my milk for gall". This

latter is very striking, because it suggests replacing a mother's nourishing milk with murdering poison, thus showing how evil Lady Macbeth is intending to be. When she learns that Duncan will sleep under her roof for one night only, she immediately seizes the opportunity, takes control and tells Macbeth to put "this night's great business into my dispatch", and orders him to "look up clear". Candidates did well who grasped the context of the passage, understood Lady Macbeth's intentions, and described her character supported by analysis of apt words and phrases. Weaker answers tended to narrate the plot of killing Duncan, or sometimes paraphrased and explained parts of the text, rather than exploring their effect.

Question 6

There were some sound answers to this question. Most candidates admired Duncan because of his worthiness and honour, and were able to support this with material from the play, such as that he rewards those who deserve it – including Macbeth, with the title of Thane of Cawdor. Few candidates explored his use of language: he refers often to nature, as he does here when talking to Macbeth and Banquo:

"I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing."

This emphasises his good nature and naturalness, as opposed to Macbeth's greed and desire for power. Some candidates pointed out the irony of Duncan being extremely courteous to Lady Macbeth, generously bringing her a gift, as she is plotting to kill him. One candidate declared that we admire Duncan because of how poorly Macbeth acts as king. They referred to Macbeth's title as hanging "loose about him", with the implication that Macbeth cannot live up to his predecessor, Duncan. Candidates who wrote a balanced and developed response showing their admiration for Duncan, supported by evidence gathered from the play, did well on this question. Less high achieving candidates tended to assert Duncan's good qualities, but without textual reference in support and some response to the writing, their answers were limited to the lower mark bands.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

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| <p>Paper 0427/03 Coursework Portfolio</p> |
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Key messages

- Teachers should check the tasks they set against the examples of effective tasks given in the Coursework Training Handbook. Tasks should not be sent to Cambridge for approval.
- Teachers should note the requirements of the syllabus before they start teaching it so that problems do not arise later in the course.
- Teachers should annotate each written assignment carefully in order to provide justification for the award of a particular mark.
- Where there is more than one teacher in a Centre, there should be evidence of internal moderation with explanations provided for any adjustments made to marks.
- Teachers should check the completeness and accuracy of all paperwork before they submit it to Cambridge for external moderation.

General comments

Cambridge moderators commented on the high quality of much of the work they read. Many assignments submitted were testament to the hard work of candidates and their teachers. It was pleasing to see in many Centres a commendable variety of tasks and a wide range of texts being used; the vast majority where of a suitable level of demand for IGCSE.

Most Centres complied with the syllabus requirements, though a small minority did not. The following requirements should be remembered:

- the need to explore two poems and two stories in poetry and short story assignments respectively
- the need for an assignment to relate to the whole text rather than having an exclusive focus on a particular chapter or scene
- the need to select literary texts having a level of demand suitable for IGCSE Level
- the need to select texts originally written in English, and not translations.

It is the Centre's responsibility to fulfil these requirements. Centres should not send details of texts and proposed tasks to Cambridge for approval.

Comments on specific assignments

The strongest critical essays were characterised by sustained perceptive analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. The tasks candidates were set had been worded in such a way that candidates were directed explicitly to explore the writing. In this regard effective tasks often began with 'Explore the ways in which [the writer]...', 'In what ways does [the writer]...?' or 'How does [the writer]...?' Such wording immediately puts the emphasis on the ways in which writers achieve their effects (Assessment Objective 3). Tasks which omitted any mention of the writer's name often led to candidates treating characters as real-life people rather than fictional constructs: e.g. 'Does George need Lennie as much as Lennie needs George?'

Teachers should check that tasks are worded in such a way that candidates can meet the higher band descriptors: e.g. 'respond *sensitively* and *in detail* to the way the writer achieves his/her effects' (Band 2).

To achieve this, it is advisable to avoid tasks such as ‘Who is to blame for Eva Smith’s death?’ or ‘Shylock: victim or villain?’ as these do not encourage consideration of the writer’s effects. A more suitable task for the latter would be: ‘To what extent does Shakespeare portray Shylock as a victim?’ In this way, re-wording can strengthen a less effective task and allow candidates to meet the higher band descriptors.

The full task should be written at the top of each assignment to enable the moderator to judge the effectiveness of the candidate’s response to it. An approximation or abbreviation of the task is of little use to the moderator. It is good practice for all teachers within a centre to discuss the wording of tasks at the start of the course in order to ensure that the tasks are fit for purpose.

A small minority of candidates opted to write an empathic response for one of their two assignments. For empathic responses to be successful, the character selected needs to have a clear sense of voice in order for that to be re-created in the candidate’s response. In addition, a precise moment rooted in the world of the text (i.e. play or novel) should provide the focus for the exploration of the chosen character’s thoughts and feelings. The character and moment selected should be made clear at the top of the assignment so that the moderator can gauge the extent to which the candidate is successful in re-creating an authentic voice. An empathic assignment should not locate a character in the future (e.g. ten years on) or create a voice for a peripheral and ‘voiceless’ character.

Marking and administration

The majority of assignments submitted this session bore evidence of teacher annotation. At its most useful, annotation takes the form of:

- judicious use of ticking in the body of the assignment (rather than the dutiful ticking of every paragraph)
- concise marginal comments pointing to the strengths and weaknesses of the response
- summative comments (at the end of essays or on the individual record card) drawing upon the wording of the band descriptors.

Taken together, these types of annotation serve to provide a rationale for the award of a particular mark and assist the moderation process greatly. Teacher annotation helps to secure more accurate marking and to make the process of moderation more accountable and transparent. By contrast, the submission of unannotated copies of candidate work reveals a misunderstanding of the moderation process.

The majority of Centres are to be congratulated on the robustness of their administration, recognising the central importance to their candidates of the proper completion of forms and the careful transcription of marks from assignments to record cards and mark sheets. A minority of Centres sent first drafts in error (drafts should not be submitted) or encased assignments in plastic covers in spite of the syllabus’s direction not to do this. The use of a staple or treasury tag (and not a paper clip) should secure the individual record card to a candidate’s two assignments.

Finally, the following is a checklist of what constitutes good practice:

- checking the suitability of tasks against the examples in the Coursework Training Handbook
- checking the suitability of texts against the requirements set out in the syllabus
- ticking creditworthy points in candidates’ work
- providing concise summative comments that relate to the relevant band descriptor
- providing evidence of internal moderation, including a concise explanation of the rationale behind any adjustment to marks
- checking the completeness and accuracy of all paperwork.