



GCE

English Language and Literature

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H074**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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H074/01 Non-fiction written and spoken texts

General Comments:

All levels of the mark scheme were represented in responses to both Section A and Section B. Almost every candidate attempted both sections. Some candidates who produced a lower-level response to Section A also produced a higher-level response for Section B, and vice versa. A very small number of candidates completed Section B before Section A. There was little evidence that timing was an issue for many candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

- Knowledge and understanding of the texts

The range of responses demonstrated that the Anthology texts are, in themselves, rich and demanding. Candidates' skills as readers and their understanding of concepts were central to their success. At the same time, candidates needed to have studied the texts closely and to understand them as fully as possible. The strongest responses were both informed and analytical. In less successful responses, there was an imbalance between knowledge and skills. Some candidates, for example, were adept in their textual analysis skills, but made fewer valid points and demonstrated less insight than they might have done with more thorough understanding of the two texts. Other candidates deployed more or less relevant background knowledge (for example, knowing the names of characters played by Marilyn Monroe) but lacked analysis of the ways meanings were shaped.

Although most candidates demonstrated a good level of familiarity with the two texts, misunderstandings were apparent in many responses. Some of the vocabulary and references in Alistair Cooke's obituary were widely misunderstood. Some candidates commented on quotations in ways that were inconsistent with their meaning in context, for example asserting that Cooke dismisses Monroe as 'just a lacquered shell' (not realising that he says she lacked such a shell) or as 'all of a piece' (not realising that he uses this phrase to argue that she had integrity).

Text B seemed more accessible to most candidates, though a lack of contextual knowledge was evident in some responses. For example, some candidates conflated Mr Slipper, the Deputy Speaker and the Leader of the Opposition; others wrote that Gillard was complaining about the Prime Minister who had been rude to her. Background knowledge is not in itself rewarded by the mark scheme; candidates who referred to 'Tony Abbott', for example, were not at an advantage over those who did not remember his name. In practice, however, candidates with informed understanding of immediate context (i.e. that Gillard was speaking against Abbott's motion in response to the Speaker's sexist text messages) tended not only to show more awareness of the influence of context on the production of the text (AO3), but also to produce more convincing analysis of the ways meanings were shaped (AO2).

- Approaches to the task

Candidates approached the task in a wide variety of different ways. The various cues in the question (compare, language, purpose, audience, context, mode, genre) presented candidates with a lot to manage. Less successful responses struggled to balance these cues, prioritising one or more of them at the expense of making meaning. Although 'meaning' is not explicitly mentioned in the question, it is implicit in the phrase 'the ways in which writers or speakers use

language’, and it is at the heart of the task. If a response made little meaning from the texts, it was sometimes possible to recognise *some* application of relevant concepts (AO1), *some* exploration of connections (AO4) and *some* understanding of the significance of contexts (AO3), but it was difficult to reward highly with respect to any of the AOs.

Some candidates, for example, adopted ‘mode’ as an organising principle. They spent a large proportion of their response seeking to ‘prove’ that the mode of Text A was written and that Text B was planned and researched. As a result, there was a circularity to their analysis (mode–feature–quote–mode) that bypassed meaning. A greater number prioritised ‘audience’, and spent a significant proportion of their response arguing that the language of each text was suitable for an ‘educated’ or ‘older’ audience. The resulting points tended to be superficial, skating across the surface of each text. Although either approach is valid and may have the potential to answer the question well, in practice both were often self-limiting.

Part of many responses focused on identifying aspects of context, audience and purpose in ways that were descriptive rather than analytical. Candidates gain little or no credit for merely *identifying* purpose, audience, context, genre or mode, and are advised against writing sequences of sentences that do so.

The least successful passages occurred where candidates seemed to regard ‘context’, ‘audience’ and ‘purpose’ as separate, closed questions whose answers could be stated briefly and were an end in themselves (e.g. ‘The purpose of Text A is to inform. The purpose of Text B is to inform and also to persuade. The audience of Text A is the family and fans of Marilyn Monroe. The audience of Text B is feminists who are interested in politics’).

Such descriptive identification of audience, purpose, etc., occurred most frequently in introductory paragraphs. Where these introductions were brief, they were unproblematic. However, in some cases, this kind of introduction took up an unhelpfully large proportion of the response, sometimes as much as 1–2 pages. In others, merely identifying purpose, audience, etc. characterised the response more generally: whole responses seemed to *summarise* the texts in relation to audience, purpose, etc., with very little detailed reference to the texts and no exploration of meaning.

While some introductions may have served some function, very few conclusions did. Most concluding paragraphs summarised ideas which had already been fully explored earlier in the answer. Candidates who tried not to repeat themselves, for example by concluding with a paragraph on how successfully the texts had achieved their aims, ended up making superficial claims that did nothing to increase their mark. It seems likely that candidates would use their time more effectively by not writing a separate conclusion; there is no need for one.

In the most successful responses, the question cues served to guide candidates towards lines of inquiry into the texts which helped them to address the assessment objectives: compare (AO4); language (AO1, AO2); purpose, audience, context, mode, genre (AO3, and also AO1 and AO2).

In general, candidates attained the higher levels of the mark scheme by:

- selecting quotations from the texts all of which were interesting in terms of language and most of which were also interesting in terms of audience, context, mode or genre
- developing an exploration of the meanings shaped by language in these quotations, drawing flexibly on particular contextual factors to make more of these meanings

For example, one higher-level response made a sequence of 2–3 points exploring Julia Gillard’s terms of reference for Tony Abbott (‘Leader of the Opposition’ and ‘this man’). The candidate acknowledged that the first term of reference was dictated by parliamentary protocol, but that its frequent repetition seemed pointed, as if Gillard was using her tone to suggest that he was not fit for high office. The candidate drew attention to the fact that Abbott was sitting right in front of

Gillard as she spoke, and that the deictic ‘this man’ suggested a level of anger and disdain which seemed unparliamentary.

In this way, the different strands of the question (language, purpose, audience, context, mode and genre) were integrated in a passage of detailed textual analysis, generating a rich reading of the text.

- Connections and comparison (AO4)

The range of responses showed that there is no one way to approach comparison. Credit was given to any way of bringing the texts together such that they genuinely shed light on each other. Some candidates organised their responses around comparisons of language use (e.g. both texts’ uses of metaphor, or triadic listing, or the way both texts deploy simple and minor sentences for different effects, or the similarity between Cooke’s emotive adjectives and Gillard’s repetition of ‘repulsive’). Others focused more on interpretive, thematic connections (e.g. the attitudes towards women explored in the texts, or the idea that both texts aimed to reveal the truth about a person). Both approaches were used successfully by candidates who explored and developed the connections through the analysis of meanings in each text. Both approaches were also used less successfully by candidates who failed to develop the connections through analysis.

Some candidates saw the word ‘compare’ exclusively in terms ‘audience’, ‘purpose’, ‘mode’ and ‘genre’, rather than language or theme. In general, this proved to be a less successful approach. To compare audiences, and then to compare purposes, and then to compare genre, etc. may not preclude well-developed comparative analysis. In practice, however, rather than facilitating meaningful connections between the texts, it resulted in a very broad approach to comparison. Sometimes it led to a brief identification of similarities and differences with little exploration of meaning. More often, it generated passages of analysis of each text which seemed largely unrelated to each other.

- Concepts, methods and terminology (AO1); analysis of ways meanings are shaped (AO2)

Many candidates demonstrated a high level of knowledge about language, and were able to apply a wide range of linguistic terminology to both texts.

Some degree of inaccuracy in terminology is to be expected at this level, and one or two misused terms did not prevent candidates from reaching the highest levels on the mark scheme. In a few responses, however, recurring inaccuracy of terminology suggested a lack of competence with respect to AO1, and as such was a limiting factor. The most frequent errors with terminology occurred with Text B. Many candidates, for example, used the terms ‘address’, ‘mode of address’ or ‘vocative’ for the way Gillard refers to Tony Abbott, apparently not realising that she directly addresses him only once (‘You said that ... I suggest you check the records’) and deviates from parliamentary convention when she does so. Many applied the term ‘rhetorical question’ loosely to any question, such as the direct speech she imagines for Abbott, ‘Now who’s one of them?’ A smaller number referred to Gillard’s modals ‘must’ and ‘should’ as imperatives.

It is the quality of the application of the concepts, rather than the quantity of terms used, which is described in the higher levels of the mark scheme. To access Level 6, for example, candidates needed not only to use a range of terms accurately, but to demonstrate the ‘apt’ use of terminology. The most successful candidates were discriminating in their use of terms, selecting frameworks and features that particularly suited these texts (such as the exploration of Gillard’s terms of reference, mentioned above).

In contrast, some candidates seemed to have a rigid checklist of frameworks they felt they should mention (e.g. lexis, grammar, structure and phonology; or tone, lexis and structure).

Often, these seemed to disadvantage candidates, as they tried to make points using terms which they could not make relevant to the texts.

Some candidates used terminology profusely, especially terms relating to word class, for example deploying the term 'noun' or 'adjective' in almost every sentence, with only occasional inaccuracies. A few candidates using many terms in this way did achieve a high mark; however, in some of these responses, there was little sense that the terms were being used in a discriminating way, or that the meanings made had been generated by rather than being incidental to the application of concepts. Where these responses also struggled to explicate the meanings shaped, offered little exploration of connections between texts, or showed little awareness of the significance of contexts, the response was placed in the lower half of the mark range, despite the high number of terms used.

Some responses were imbalanced with regard to AO1 and AO2. Some candidates used a range of terms accurately, but had very few of their own words for the meanings shaped. Other candidates showed insight into the ways meanings were shaped, but used less terminology in a way that limited their mark with respect to AO1.

Selection and exploration of quotation is essential in relation to AO2. Some candidates showed strong insight into the whole texts, but failed to explore or even to give examples; as such, they demonstrated little analysis of the ways meanings are shaped, and perhaps underachieved with regard to AO2.

Section B

Some candidates responded to Section B with a high degree of creativity, producing texts which they seemed to have enjoyed writing and which were enjoyable to read. Some were also able to sustain their chosen genre to an impressive standard. The range of responses seemed to be informed by one of three levels of knowledge of genre conventions: some candidates seemed to have broad experience as readers within their chosen genre; some appeared to have had encountered the genre only within the classroom; and others had a very narrow experience of the genre, perhaps limited to the texts in Section A.

The connections between Section A and Section B did help some candidates to achieve a sense of genre. However, they caused issues for candidates who were less aware of the ways in which Texts A and B deviate from their genres, and who were over-reliant on Cooke or Gillard for a style model. Some candidates used specific words, phrases and sometimes even whole sentences lifted from Texts A or B (e.g. a school assembly speech containing 'I will not tolerate' and 'I will not be lectured'; or an obituary in which the deceased was 'charming, shrewd and pathetic', or 'talked easily' about their past when people 'had the gall to ask', or had been 'shuttled' to foster homes before a 'first rung on the ladder'). This kind of wholesale appropriation of language usually indicated a lack of competency, and tended to result in a lower-level mark.

There was some conflation between Question 2 and Question 4, with newspaper articles about instant celebrity that focused on the death of a celebrity, and obituaries of celebrities whose death had been the result of a steep rise to fame. This sometimes seemed to disadvantage candidates, who might have produced a stronger piece if they had had a clearer sense of purpose. In the least successful instances, it was difficult to tell which question had been attempted, particularly if the candidate did not number their response.

In all higher-level responses to Section B, there was a sense of the writer knowing where they were going: the response was organised, and its structure evidenced some degree of planning.

Some responses appeared to have been pre-prepared: some had a length and level of detail inconsistent with the limited time available; others seemed to share content, as if having studied

the same model. Some of these were adapted successfully, particularly where the candidate's prior work had allowed them to develop an original interest. Others were adapted less successfully, perhaps where candidates felt a need to lever in pre-prepared content in a way that made it difficult for them to produce a fresh, fluent piece of writing.

A small number of candidates took a parodic approach to the task, with mixed results. Some successful parodies enabled candidates to achieve the highest marks, demonstrating a high degree of control and perceptive understanding of genre and context. More often, the parody lacked control; it didn't quite make sense in places, and suggested insecure understanding of how it would be received by a reader who did not share the same points of reference.

Question 2

Some candidates seemed to have been well prepared for the topic of celebrity culture, and wrote well-organised, detailed explorations of the topic. There was a range of success in terms of balancing the general and the specific: some responses focused so heavily on a particular celebrity (e.g. Justin Bieber, Kim Kardashian) that they did not address the topic in a sufficiently general way; others lacked the depth and detail necessary to make the response engaging.

Some candidates either altogether missed or found it difficult to engage with the way the question specified 'instant' celebrity, using examples of real stars such as Amy Winehouse and Michael Jackson as contemporary instances of the kind of tragic downfall explored by Cooke in Text A. Others responded creatively to the word 'instant', using direct address in second person pronouns to take the reader on a roller-coaster journey of their own imagined rise and fall.

A number of responses had less of a sense of genre than might be expected from this component of this specification. Higher-level responses were informed by a sense of the newspaper article as a text type, combining a journalistic style with an appropriate sense of audience and information structure. The subgenre was not specified in the question, and successful responses included a range of different styles from a broadsheet opinion column to a tabloid news article. Less successful candidates had little sense of genre, producing a response that felt like a decontextualised composition – more like an essay or an entry for a school writing competition than a newspaper article.

Question 3

Question 3 offered perhaps the most accessible genre of the Section B questions. Most candidates easily achieved a spoken rather than written voice, with effective references to shared context, deliberate convergence to a more colloquial register, and appropriate use of direct address.

Some candidates leaned heavily on rhetorical devices, such as repetition, tripartite structures, heavily emotive adjectives, etc. They may have been influenced by the features in Text B, or by the task's similarity to original writing tasks on GCSE English Language courses. In many cases, the prominence of these features was less effective than it might have been at GCSE and not entirely appropriate for the task.

The topic of 'inequality' proved difficult for some candidates to fully get hold of. Some candidates had such a strong sense of their own school experiences that they imagined a teacher telling students off for behaving badly, or a pupil complaining about school uniform, in a way that lacked sensitivity to the abstract nature of 'inequality'. Some wrote about equality entirely in general terms, without responding to the question's direction towards 'a group of your choice', and produced a less engaging piece as a result. Higher-level responses candidates grasped

both aspects of the question, for example writing successfully about the LGBT community both in the imagined school setting and in wider society.

A small number of candidates made a kind of category error in terms of mode and text type: their response consisted not of a text prepared in the written mode to be delivered in speech, but of the transcription of a series of imagined exchanges, complete with non-fluency features. It is easy to see how such a misunderstanding could arise, given both the transcribed nature of some of the Anthology texts (including Text B) and the centrality to a good response of imagining the situation in which the speech takes place. However, candidates need to understand the text type of a prepared speech, written to be delivered, and they need to be able to recognise a Section B question asking for such a text.

Question 4

Some candidates were evidently well prepared for Question 4, with both the length and the quality of their responses suggesting that they drew on obituaries they had written as part of their learning on the course.

The opening sentence of Text A meant that, in Question 1, there was some conflation between the text types of a news report and an obituary (e.g. ‘The purpose of Text A is to inform readers of the death of Marilyn Monroe’). This conflation caused greater problems for some candidates in Question 4: many responses opened with the graphic depiction of a scene more suited to a murder mystery or a crime report than a conventional obituary. For some candidates, the need to create an ‘imagined’ celebrity pushed the style more towards narrative fiction than a reflective summary of a person’s life achievements, with attempts to create drama and intrigue rather than a more journalistic information structure.

In this sense, wider reading seemed an important factor in the most successful responses. A number of higher-level responses wrote about imaginary footballers or musicians, and drew very effectively on the style of sports journalism or music journalism they had perhaps encountered outside the classroom. Less successful responses used the first person extensively or were heavily emotive, in ways that seemed to confuse the obituary genre with that of a funeral speech.

H074/02 The language of literary texts

General Comments:

This paper provides the opportunity for candidates to integrate their study of both literary and linguistic methods whilst engaging with two different genres: prose and poetry.

The best responses were those where candidates successfully demonstrated an integrated approach to linguistic and literary study which was well supported by textual detail and understanding. The material provided on the paper for both Sections A and B provided opportunities for candidates to make a judicious selection of the literary and linguistic techniques they had studied in their Centres, as well as allowing for them to demonstrate a range of relevant interpretations and approaches. General textual knowledge of the set texts was reasonably secure across all the candidates but the level of perceptive understanding was variable. A number of candidates were able to respond to the paper with considerable critical and interpretative rigour. A range of responses was found to all printed extracts and poems and the differing levels of engagement proved that these were all accessible to the majority of candidates. The questions provided a consistently fair level of accessibility and provided clear opportunities for differentiation. Many candidates responded by offering a welcome range of relevant interpretations and approaches.

Successful responses included one or more of the following:

- Written responses which demonstrated an integrated understanding of literary and linguistic elements of the texts.
- A sharp focus on the question and texts printed on the paper drawing in relevant further detail from the novel or other poems in a collection to support the analysis of the material provided.
- Demonstration of the skills described in the Assessment Objectives.
- Blended understanding of the significance and influence of context.
- Detailed close analytical readings of the extract in Section A and poems in Section B.
- An ability to use wide range of linguistic/literary terminology accurately.
- Selected and focused contextual comments.
- An understanding of the features of a particular genre.
- Clarity of written expression and an academic approach to written analysis.
- A logically structured response.

Less successful responses included one or more of the following:

- Answers which labelled words or phrases with terminology such as compound nouns, premodifiers, finite verb phrases where these had been inaccurately identified and were not related to meaning and/or effect.
- Made vague assertions about lexical choices or semantic fields without fully exploring why links could be made between particular vocabulary choices or how these impacted on meaning.
- Making generalised statements such as 'the tone changes at this point' without defining how precisely there has been a change in stance and what impact this has on the text and meaning.
- Bolted on information on context in a separate paragraph that is not directly linked to the exploration of the printed material on the paper.
- Personal views that were judgmental and demonstrated prejudicial beliefs.
- A narrative or generalised approach to the texts.
- Limited and often inaccurate use of literary and linguistic terminology.
- Confusion over the different parts of speech, particularly with the recognition of adverbs, adjectives and auxiliary verbs.
- Insecure written expression and a limited method of academic written analysis.

Section A – The language of Prose

In this section candidates are required to 'write about the ways in which an author tells the story in this extract'. The first bullet point then asks candidates to explore the narrative techniques used in the extract. Successful candidates chose three or four narrative techniques to explore in detail and linked the ways in which the story was being told to key themes or details from other sections of the novel studied. Less successful candidates worked through the extract chronologically picking out phrases to analyse or made very general comments which were not grounded in the material printed. Some candidates started a paragraph with a quotation and then explored the language effects and did not mention narrative

techniques at all. It was generally helpful to write an opening paragraph giving a brief summary of the story being told in the extract and relating it to the wider novel. Perceptive responses blended genre, the wider novel and integrated analysis of literary and linguistic techniques into their exploration of quotations which illuminated a particular narrative technique. Less successful responses commented on each of these as separate paragraphs without making explicit links to the extract printed on the paper. Literary and generic contexts were often more useful than socio-historic contexts for close analysis. Candidates should avoid 'bolting on' contextual material. There was no expectation that responses should include quotations from the wider novel, however, many candidates did incorporate these and made relevant and pertinent choices when doing so. Candidates are expected to explore linguistic techniques within the narrative strand that they are discussing, these might include: lexis, grammar, tense, sentence structures, repetition and patterns, tone and register, etc.

Section B – The language of Poetry

Candidates are expected to explore language and poetic techniques. The focus is on literary and stylistic methods which might include: imagery and symbolism; rhythm and rhyme; linguistic choices e.g. phonological, lexical, semantic, grammatical; foregrounding and deviation through the use of repetition, patterns and other aspects. A number of skills needed to be demonstrated in this section in line with the requirements of the question:

Comparison

Three main approaches were adopted by candidates. Many successful responses integrated the comparative aspects of the two poems throughout their discussion but the majority of candidates moved between the poems in alternating paragraphs making links between features of language and structure as they did so. Some candidates wrote about one poem and then wrote about the second poem. For less successful responses this read as two separate essays whilst more successful responses wrote about the first poem and then made links back to this whilst writing about the second poem. There is an expectation that the poems will be given an equal coverage in the discussion and opportunities for further marks were lost where there was an uneven treatment of the two texts.

Language effects

The majority of candidates explored the ways in which meaning was created in the two poems very successfully with the best responses discussing alternative interpretations of different language choices and considering where these reflected common themes across a poet's writing.

Poetic techniques

The more successful candidates were able to identify both literary and linguistic concepts and methods and examine how these impacted on meaning. Equally, perceptive and good responses explored the poet's choices for structure and form and discussed how these helped to convey the poet's message. Less successful responses simply stated the number of stanzas, wrote down the rhyme scheme or identified the form of the poem. The significance of these choices were not explored and often aspects of form and structure were misidentified.

Relevant contextual factors

Candidates are expected to consider poems within the wider collection, for example in relation to poetic tradition, historical or religious context or significance of place and time. This was generally done well although where dates were misidentified this led to some misplaced analysis. More successful responses often made relevant links to other poems in the collection, including quotes.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

Charlotte Brontë 'Jane Eyre'

Successful answers integrated aspects of the gothic, particularly the use of qualities of the grotesque and supernatural. They also referred to the ghostly aspects presented and their popularity in Victorian writing. The point of view of Jane in her role as a homodiegetic narrator was explored well. There was often careful consideration of the discourse and maturity of Jane narrating the story contrasting with her presentation of herself as a child and young woman. Discussion of Jane, the narrator and her younger self also explored the ways in which her tone did not reflect the emotions felt by her character during the extract being analysed.

The female cast of this extract were explored through both voice and characterisation by candidates. Contrasts were drawn between the questions and naïve presentation of Jane as she accepts the responses from Mrs Fairfax who controls the conversation and thus manipulates Jane. Responses also considered the presentation of Grace Poole and Bertha Mason and the aspects of mystery behind both of these women at this point in the novel. Candidates discussed Jane's partial self-doubt about the validity of Mrs Fairfax's claims when she was faced with the 'square-made figure' and 'hard, plain face' of Grace Poole and how this unromantic presentation contrasts with the sound effects of the passage, the 'curious laugh', 'clamorous peal', 'low, syllabic tone', 'odd murmur' and 'cachinnation'.

An exploration of setting was also a common feature of responses where the lexical choices relating to common scenes in gothic texts were considered such as 'attic', 'overgrown path', 'Bluebeard's castle', 'narrow garret staircase', 'lonely chamber' and 'great stairs'.

Question No. 2

F Scott Fitzgerald 'The Great Gatsby'

This was by far the most popular choice of texts in the prose section of the paper. Responses generally identified this extract as Chapter 5 and recognised its importance as a climactic point in the novel where Gatsby's fate is both foreshadowed and set in motion. There was some excellent consideration of the genre of tragedy amongst the responses where his obsession with Daisy was recognised as Gatsby's hamartia whilst his confidence that she felt the same way and would leave Tom was seen as his hubris. Significant cultural aspects were also blended into successful responses including the relevance of the Jazz Era, American Dream and prohibition and how these impacted on the relationships of characters in the novel.

More successful candidates considered the use of motifs and symbolism, particularly *water* both within the extract and across the wider novel, making links to how this foreshadowed Gatsby's death. Responses explored the significance of 'her hand was wet with glistening drops', 'puddle of water' and 'increasing rain'. Less successful responses endeavoured to write lengthy paragraphs on the use of rain as pathetic fallacy identifying this as a narrative technique rather than a literary device. This approach was more successful where candidates included pathetic fallacy as part of a discussion on imagery within the extract. The use of time, structure and chronology was also discussed very successfully with some excellent and detailed considerations of the significance of the 'defunct mantelpiece clock'.

The majority of candidates were able to make pertinent comment on the characterisation of Gatsby, Daisy and Nick within the extract drawing parallels with the settings of the novel - West Egg, East Egg and Valley of Ashes, and the setting of the extract within Nick's house. The contrast between the successful and enigmatic Gatsby presented earlier in the novel compared to his presentation as gauche and nervous in Chapter 5 led to interesting discussions on language choices such as 'light dignified knocking', 'pale as death', 'hands plunged like weights', 'glaring tragically', 'choking murmur', 'a strained counterfeit of perfect ease', 'on a wire', 'trembling fingers' and 'tense, unhappy eyes'. Daisy was often discussed through her use of voice with links made to other sections of the novel, although there was some misunderstanding of the expression 'wild tonic' with candidates identifying this as an alcoholic drink which led to inaccurate assertions. Less successful responses often wrote entire pages on Nick's point of view as an unreliable narrator but had very little substance to back this up and did not really relate this to the extract. The more successful explorations compared his earlier comment in Chapter 1 'I'm inclined to reserve all judgements' to his presentation of the other characters in this extract including Ferdie, the chauffeur and the 'demoniac Finn'.

Question No. 3

Chinua Achebe 'Things Fall Apart'

This was a popular choice of text. Some excellent links were made between the cultural aspects of the novel and the extract, such as the traditions of the virtual world of Umuofia and the Igbo people of Nigeria. Better responses also considered the importance of genre and Achebe's response to Joseph Conrad's postcolonial novella 'Heart of Darkness'. Aspects of tragedy were also considered including the ways in which the extract foreshadowed Okonkwo's fate, his hamartia was identified as his need to be a strong male role model and the irony of his having committed a female crime and needing to flee his home.

The contrasting points of view that could be explored through the use of an omniscient narrator was generally a successful avenue of analysis. Candidates made some excellent points about the differing perspectives and presentation of Okonkwo where 'the only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the

clan' and then the switch to Obierika's more considered and philosophical perspective as 'Obierika was a man who thought about things'.

There was also some perceptive exploration of chronology, sequence and setting where candidates explored the three key shifts within the passage from a wild and ritualistic celebration described as 'drums and the dancing', 'fever-heat' and 'cannon rent the sky' to the sudden change in tone and atmosphere as 'All was silent' where 'a boy lay in a pool of blood' as 'Okonkwo's gun had exploded'. There was also some well thought out discussion on the character of Okonkwo generated through this unexpected disaster. The cultural aspects of the final part of the sequence with the significance of justice and retribution and hints of violence and superstition portrayed through 'dressed in garbs of war', 'demolished his red walls', 'destroyed his barn', 'cleansing the land' and 'justice of the earth goddess'.

Question No. 4

Arundhati Roy 'The God of Small Things'

There were only a handful of responses to this question. Candidates discussed the links between dreams and the extract, particularly those referring to the sea. Successful responses made links between the way in which time is manipulated and made links between the Orangedrink Lemondrink man and the little boy's hair being described as 'well-whipped egg white'. Candidates also identified the use of children's vocabulary by the adults such as 'left leg, right leg'. This was linked to the way in which the children copied the behaviour of the adults using repetition in the way that children typically explain stories. Successful responses also discussed the way in which the narrative holds back key information despite the fact that the readers have already been informed of Sophie Mol's death. The retrospective voice of the narrator is recognised in the way in which the significance of Sophie Mol's visit grows to dramatic proportions and is given a title 'What Will Sophie Mol think?'

Question No. 5

Ian McEwan 'Atonement'

Candidates made links to the historical period in which the novel was set and identified the extract as falling between the two World Wars. They also recognised the significance of the country house setting and the power of the Tallis family and ability to influence the police investigation as a consequence of their status. Responses also discussed the novel as a bildungsroman and Postmodernist text.

Successful candidates made perceptive links between the retrospective narrative and storytelling of the older Briony in Part 3 and her ability to articulate the younger Briony's thoughts. There were some excellent discussions on whether older Briony was unreliable as a narrator as she was constructing her younger self as a villain to enable herself to atone for her actions or whether her patchy memory creates a story of the event which is not entirely accurate. Top responses recognised McEwan's metafiction as he consciously draws attention to the process of writing through younger Briony's obsession with storytelling, her creation of Lola's rape as a creative fictitious event and Briony's later telling of the story many years later.

There were some lovely responses exploring the extended wedding metaphor of the extract and discussing the macabre and irresponsible nature of younger Briony as she is so preoccupied with playing the central character in her own construct that she fails to recognise the impact her false accusations will have on other characters. The majority of candidates made appropriate links to Part 3 and the wedding of Paul and Lola.

Explorations of setting focused on the house and landscape but also the binary opposition of light/dark within the extract making excellent links to other chapters in Part 1 and drawing together lexical groupings.

Question No. 6

Jhumpa Lahiri 'The Namesake'

Candidates were generally able to draw parallels between the different cultures of India and America in their analysis. Better responses recognised the novel as being a bildungsroman and discussed how this extract related to Gogol's acceptance of his culture and name, as well as making links to the title of the novel. Candidates also explored the barriers between generations that are experienced by immigrants and how this is presented by the two differing points of view of Gogol and Ashima on the rubbings of grave headstones.

The contrast of the two different settings of death were explored well with candidates considering the cold sterile American graveyard where anyone could stroll contrasted with the burning ghats in Calcutta, 'the most forbidden of places'. This led into discussions of the presentations of the different characters of Gogol and Ashima and the generation gap between them both culturally and literally.

The use of symbolism through names and their significance also generated some good discursive points making links to the difficult relationship that Gogol has with his father, Ashoke, and the fact that he is unable to explain the circumstances of his accident and the links to the writer, Nikolai Gogol. The use of archaic names and biblical names on the gravestones was also explored and the ways in which these again set up cultural and religious barriers between the Americans and immigrants.

Question No. 7

William Blake 'Holy Thursday' (Innocence) and 'The Chimney Sweeper' (Experience)

This was the most popular of the poetry questions and candidates generally did very well with their comparative discussions on these two poems. It should be noted from the specification that not all paired named poems in the collection are included. This means that any two poems may be compared and this could include a contrasting pair as in this paper, or equally it might include two innocence poems or two experience poems. This is to ensure parity with candidates studying other collections from the specification.

All candidates across the range of ability were able to make valid comments to support their comparative discussion on the contextual influences of the poems. Responses explored Blake's views on organised religion, the use of child labour as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, the use of church dogma in education, 'free love' and Romanticism. Some really good links and discussions were made both to other poems in the collection and to the etchings associated with individual poems. There were many excellent discussions on the use of colour in both poems.

Less successful answers described the structure and rhyme scheme of both poems but then didn't know how, or why, these were significant. More successful answers explored how rhyming words were linked in 'Holy Thursday' and the ways in which the change in rhyme scheme in 'The Chimney Sweeper' delineates a change in voice and tone.

Question No. 8

Emily Dickinson 'There's a certain Slant of light' and 'I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –'

This was a popular choice of question. The majority of candidates were able to make useful links between the poems and Dickinson's mental frailty, religious beliefs and obsession with death and the afterlife. Responses generally recognised how the poems demonstrated typical features of her poems such as the use of dashes and capitalisation of interior words. Weaker responses tended to make very generalised comments declaring that Dickinson's poems were ungrammatical but not really explaining what they meant by this. There was also some confusion over the persona and Dickinson's own voice.

Successful responses explored the contrasts between language choices for the death bed scene of 'I heard a Fly buzz' and the fear of change and negative oppression portrayed in 'There's a certain Slant of light'. They also drew parallels between the practical distribution of material possessions of the death bed scene with the more introspective and philosophical aspects of the persona trying to understand her relationship with God. Responses made good links between the macabre and unexpected imagery of the fly and Dickinson's use of colour, sound and synaesthesia contrasted with the imagery of winter light and personification of the landscape to represent and reflect the persona's internal conflicts in 'There's a certain Slant of light'. Good responses also recognised the sense of the persona in both poems waiting for a sign or intervention from God.

Question No. 9

Seamus Heaney 'The Haw Lantern' and 'Postscript'

Contextually responses recognised the representation of the troubles in Ireland, Heaney hints at Irish traditions as well as his own political views. They also recognised the reference to Diogenes and how the mythical political challenges of this Greek philosopher could be related to the Ireland described by

Heaney. Better responses also picked up references to Yeats' poetry as well as how 'Postscript' falls into the Irish tradition of describing the landscape and places through poetry.

Structurally, most candidates identified the use of long sentences and enjambment in both poems and how these signalled a change in direction in both poems from a broader description to a more personal and intimate engagement with the use of second person pronouns. Perceptive candidates considered the contrast between the accusatory 'you' of 'Postscript' and the more generalised 'you' of 'The Haw Lantern'. Responses generally drew parallels between the lexical choices relating to location, seasons and nature.

Good responses considered the way in which Heaney used the haw fruit as a symbol of hope and dignity in the face of the Irish troubles and contrasted this with the symbolism associated with swans as portrayed in 'Postscript' associated with the positive qualities of love, music and the goddess, Venus. A particularly good response discussed the way in which 'The Haw Lantern' "was almost written as a letter to Ireland" whilst 'Postscript' gave the "feel of a personal reminiscence".

Question No. 10

Eavan Boland 'From the Painting Back from Market by Chardin' and 'Degas's Laundresses'

Contextually responses referred to the fact that both paintings described in the poem were by male French painters who portrayed women in a stereotypical way. More successful responses also recognised Boland's interest in art as her mother was an artist. They recognised the ways in which Boland explored a feminist perspective of repression of the women captured on canvas. Good responses analysed the way in which she addresses the women in Degas's painting directly with the pronoun 'you' demonstrating a much closer relationship with the subjects than the male artists. They also recognised the contrast of the single 'peasant woman' in Chardin's painting where she tries to imagine what the woman might have been thinking and her past history.

Good responses examined Chardin's choice of colour palette of blue-grey referred to by Boland as 'the colours of a country day' suggesting that expected colours might have been green and brown. This led them to question whether Chardin's portrayal of the woman as a 'peasant woman' was a fabrication as they suggested the use of more expensive dyes. Comparisons were drawn with the description of clothing in 'Degas's Laundresses' where these women are washer women working with the 'twists' and 'white turns' of 'fitted sheets'. Responses recognised the timeless quality of characters in works of art and compared Boland's hints at the dreams of the different women demonstrating their reality and physical presence. They also explored the contrast of the working women and their 'chat's' of 'wedding outfits' which is juxtaposed with the warning that a man 'is watching you' suggesting fear and control. This was generally compared with the control of Chardin's woman as 'he has fixed/Her limbs' linking this to the objectification of women.

Question No. 11

Carol Ann Duffy 'Rapture' and 'New Year'

This was the second most popular choice of poetry question. Responses made contextual links to Duffy's Roman Catholic upbringing, her status as Poet Laureate and her relationship with the Scottish poet, Jackie Kay. Better responses also recognised the deliberate ambiguity of the gender of the persona's lover in the collection and the way that this makes the poems relevant to every reader, whatever their sexual orientation.

Good explorations were made of the titles of both poems recognising that 'New Year' represents fresh starts and new beginnings whilst 'Rapture' is often associated with a religious experience of being transported to heaven, although many candidates missed the alternative meaning of 'Rapture' as a sensual experience of joy. Indeed, many responses failed to pick up on the more sensual language and imagery of the poems, tending to focus just on the presentation of love in its varying guises and the stages of a relationship.

There were some excellent discussions on the structure of the poems and how these impacted on meaning but there was also some confusion. Most candidates identified the sonnet 'Rapture' as a Shakesperian sonnet but many considered it to be a Petrarchan sonnet. A number of candidates declared that it was unusual as it only had a one line volta missing the link between 'Huge skies' and 'thinking air'. The majority of responses were able to make pertinent links between the language effects and use of imagery in both poems and candidates were generally secure in their understanding of the poet's

underlying message in each text. More successful responses made numerous links to other poems in the anthology.

Question No. 12

Jacob Sam-La Rose 'Make Some Noise' and 'Speechless I'

This was a popular choice of question. More successful responses were able to distinguish between the use of a persona and the autobiographical aspect of the two poems. They were also able to make a link between the poems demonstrating how the conflicts between generations are repeated through time. A couple of candidates queried whether this would be taken further with Sam-La Rose questioning the musical choices of the next generation. Less successful responses did not recognise the iconic singers and musicians referenced in the poems or identify with the different musical genres mentioned. The majority of responses recognised the link between the musical aspects of both poems and the significance of Sam-La Rose's poetry being performance poetry.

Responses generally recognised how both poems represented the need for young people to find their own voice and independence. They also discussed the significance of family to Sam-La Rose as his mother (and her Guyanese upbringing) features not only in these two poems but across the anthology. Good discussions centred around the difficulties that his mother had with new musical forms as she considered 'that hip-hop wasn't music' and thought that it was 'hard noise'. Candidates compared this to her own experience of her father as he 'forbids her from playing guitar' and believes 'that a proper young Guyanese woman belongs to the home'. Despite these misunderstandings responses suggested that his mother's experience was a negative one with a violent lexis of 'cracks the frame', 'broken wood' and 'tangled nylon' whilst her own response to her son is a softer, more positive one in 'Make Some Noise' where Sam La-Rose describes how it 'was the honesty of sculpted wood and steel'.

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