OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCSE (9-1)

English Literature

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J352**

OCR Report to Centres June 2017

About this Examiner Report to Centres

This report on the 2017 Summer assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful
- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection
- points of advice for future examinations

It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.
Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.
The report also includes:

- **Guidance on how to put your results in context** – using the outcomes of Cambridge Assessment's research that indicates that volatility in schools' GCSE exam results is normal, quantifiable and predictable
- Links to important documents such as **grade boundaries**
- A reminder of our **post-results services** including Enquiries About Results
- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme
- A link to our handy Teacher Guide on **Supporting the move to linear assessment** to support you with the ongoing transition

Putting your results in context

If you've had results this year that you weren't expecting then the latest research from Cambridge Assessment may help to explain why. You may be surprised to learn that volatility in schools' GCSE exam results is normal, quantifiable and predictable.

Researchers from Cambridge Assessment argue in a report, *Volatility happens: Understanding variation in schools' GCSE results* (April 2017), that fluctuations are to be expected and can be largely explained by a change in the students or even just simple chance. They say that although it might be seen as obvious, in some years pupils will perform better than expected, while in other years pupils will perform worse.

The study will enable you to manage expectations and have conversations with your heads and governors so that they can interpret changes in expected results appropriately. The research builds on an earlier study that ruled out exam grade boundaries and marking as major components of volatility. The current research adds an understanding of just how much volatility can be accounted for by the routine changes in students between years and normal variations in individual students' performance in a particular exam.

Be prepared for conversations about what's normal in terms of outcomes by reading our press release, researcher blog and by downloading this handy GCSE English and Maths fluctuation infographic**.**

Ofqual has also published a report looking at patterns of variability in outcomes of schools and colleges for particular GCSE subjects as one way of understanding the extent of volatility in the system.

Grade boundaries
Grade boundaries for this, and all other assessments, can be found on Interchange.

Enquiry About Results
If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our Enquiry About Results services.
For full information about the options available visit: http://ocr.org.uk/administration/stage-5-post-results-services/enquiries-about-results/

Supporting the move to linear assessment
This was the first year that students were assessed in a linear structure. To help you navigate the changes and to support you with areas of difficulty, download our helpful Teacher guide: http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/341817-moving-from-modular-to-linear-qualifications-teachers-guide.pdf

Further support from OCR

activeresults

Active Results offers a unique perspective on results data and greater opportunities to understand students' performance.
It allows you to:

- Review reports on the **performance of individual candidates**, cohorts of students and whole centres
- **Analyse results** at question and/or topic level
- **Compare your centre** with OCR national averages or similar OCR centres.
- Identify areas of the curriculum where students excel or struggle and help **pinpoint strengths and weaknesses** of students and teaching departments.

http://www.ocr.org.uk/getting-started-with-active-results

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

English Literature (J352)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

J352/01 Exploring modern and literary heritage texts

General Comments:

Examiners reported seeing a great deal of excellent work in this first series of the new specification. There was much evidence of real enthusiasm and engagement in the candidate responses across all questions and texts.

Candidates across the ability range responded well to the new and varied question types on this untiered paper. There were few unfinished Section B responses and most candidates completed all the questions within the time allowed.

Section A: Modern prose or drama

In part (a) of the questions in Section A candidates are required to compare an extract from their taught modern prose or drama text with an unseen extract from a text of the same genre. It was clear that the vast majority of candidates were comfortable with the skills of comparison and most addressed the bullet points offered to ensure that some relevant comparisons were drawn between the extracts. There were a number of candidates who clearly relished using their independent reading skills to tackle an unseen text and wrote very perceptively. The most successful responses offered interwoven comparisons, but even the weaker responses were usually able to make some relevant links between the extracts. A very small number of candidates ignored the unseen extract completely. There were some instances of excessively long responses to part (a). Candidates should ensure that the time spent on this question is commensurate with the marks allocated, although they do need to build in some time to read the extracts. Some candidates spent unnecessary time and effort referring to the wider text when discussing their taught text. In part (a) they are only expected to focus on the extracts provided on the paper.

The assessment objectives were generally well addressed with most candidates remembering to comment on the writers' use of language, form and structure (AO2), although some were less successful in addressing AO3 and making relevant comments on how contextual details informed their understanding of the extracts. For example, when comparing 'An Inspector Calls' to 'Viv and Di and Rose', only a minority of candidates pointed out that the unseen extract was based in a more modern setting than 'An Inspector Calls' and considered the impact of that on the way that the characters reacted to the difficult relationships. When addressing AO2 some candidates adopted a 'feature-spotting' approach, sometimes using subject terminology inaccurately and often finding it difficult to make meaningful and relevant observations about the use of the feature identified. The most common example of this was use of sentence structures (long and short), use of dashes, use of exclamations and use of lists. The most repeated error with use of basic subject terminology was when identifying the genre of the text studied. For example, 'An Inspector Calls' was repeatedly referred to as a novel and 'Animal Farm' was often referred to as a play or even a poem. Similarly, the uses of audience and reader were often confused. The best analysis of language in the drama texts emerged naturally through analysis of the way that stage directions could be interpreted, the way that the characters interacted, and the impact of the language used on the audience's understanding of characters and situations. There was some perceptive and insightful analysis of Sheila's controlled emotions indicated in the stage directions, the way that she speaks to Gerald and the way that she interrupts her father, which often led to insightful comments on the tension created in the scene. Candidates were able to make many links to the unseen text, 'Viv and Di and Rose', where the conversation was much less controlled due to their repeated laughter and continuous interruptions. Likewise, the use of Leah's monologue and Phil's silence in DNA led to some interesting considerations of

hierarchy and status within relationships which was readily compared to the school disco setting of 'Why is John Lennon Wearing a Skirt?' where the language exchanges explored much the same themes but very differently. Some of the analysis of language and structure on the prose text 'Never Let Me Go' was highly impressive with many candidates making very sensitive comparisons of the clones' first real experience of the world outside Hailsham to Tochi's arrival in the UK as an immigrant in the unseen extract from 'The Year of the Runaways'.

Examiners reported seeing responses to most of the texts set for the examination. The most popular texts were 'An Inspector Calls' and 'Animal Farm', but there were also a number of responses on 'Anita and Me', 'Never Let Me Go' and 'DNA'. The only responses examiners reported seeing on 'My Mother Said I Never Should' appeared to be rubric infringements where the candidates had attempted part (a) of the question but then used the extract again to answer part (b). This indicated that they had probably not studied the text they had chosen to answer on. They were still able to access marks for their response to part (a) but no comments on the extract set for part (a) will be credited in the response to part (b). There were also a number of instances where candidates answered question 1(a) on 'Anita and Me' before realising that their set text was on a page further into the question paper. Some candidates then crossed out their response to question 1(a) but had used up valuable time attempting the wrong question so were sometimes unable to complete both parts of the question on their taught text. Occasionally candidates infringed the rubric of the examination by offering a part (a) response to one text and a part (b) response to a different text. In these instances, only the highest mark counted as parts (a) and (b) must be based on the same text in this section of the paper. A very small number of candidates attempted all or several of the part (a) questions, usually offering rather brief responses to each one.

In Part (b) of this section, candidates are required to choose a further moment in their set text to explore the question set. The question is related to part (a) but usually widens in scope. The most successful responses to part (b) chose a section of text to focus on in detail, although some candidates chose several moments or took a wider overview of the question which was an equally acceptable approach. In this part of the question only AO1 and AO2 are addressed so candidates do need to analyse language, form and structure in their response. Where several moments were used for the response to part (b) there was often very little attempt to address AO2, as the comments tended to be rather general and sometimes descriptive. Where the candidate chose a key moment of the text and had revised it thoroughly, there was far more scope to analyse language and structure to ensure that the assessment objectives were addressed more evenly. A number of candidates offered a great deal of contextual information in this part of the question, which could sometimes be credited as relevant information (for example the tension between the Birling parents and children due to a clash between capitalist and socialist principles), but was sometimes 'bolted-on' learned information for AO3 that was not relevant to the question. This was particularly noticeable in responses to 'Animal Farm' where many candidates spent time drawing comparisons between the pigs and various figures in the Russian Revolution instead of exploring the text itself to analyse how the pigs change the truth to suit themselves. Candidates should be reminded that AO3 is not assessed in part (b) of Section A on this paper. Weaker responses to part (b) tended to be rather descriptive with few textual references and often no attempt to analyse language, form and structure at all. There were some responses in part (b) where candidates failed to focus on the question, sometimes appearing to answer a completely different question: Sheila discovering something new about herself, or Mr Birling's dominant character, in 'An Inspector Calls', for example. Some candidates made attempts to address the question but were clearly relying on a pre-prepared response. It is crucial that candidates adapt their knowledge to answer the question set fully rather than try to twist the question to suit what they have learned.

Some responses to part (b) were rather short and undeveloped. This was sometimes because the candidate had spent too long on part (a) but was also linked to lack of preparation at times, as candidates do need to learn quotations for this part of the Section A question.

Section B: 19th century prose

Examiners reported seeing some highly impressive responses in Section B. It was clear that many candidates demonstrated true engagement with the literary heritage texts studied. Candidates were offered a choice of an extract-based question leading to a whole-text response, or a discursive question on the whole text. Both question types proved very popular and there were few instances of a candidate failing to move beyond the extract in the former. Some candidates chose to look at one other moment in the text in detail and others looked at several moments or took an overview of the character, theme or relationship in the whole text. In Section B any of these approaches will work successfully as long as an appropriate amount of time has been spent exploring the potential of the extract. Occasionally candidates did not spend enough time looking at the wider text which meant that they could not access marks in the higher levels. In discursive questions candidates can chose which parts of the text they refer to, but must look at a minimum of two moments. Most responses looked at several moments, with many showing an impressively wide knowledge of the whole text. Most of these responses were able to use textual references to support the responses, or refer to specific incidents and moments in the text. Many candidates tackled the discursively questions very convincingly across all levels of ability.

The most popular 19th century text was 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' but 'Great Expectations' and 'Pride and Prejudice' were also popular choices. There were also a number of responses on 'War of the Worlds' and 'Jane Eyre'. Examiners commented on the wide range of texts and questions seen.

On this section of the question paper all three assessment objectives are addressed, as well as AO4 (SPaG) and candidates seemed very aware of the need to both analyse language, form and structure, and show understanding of the contextual details relevant to their set text. When choosing extract based questions, most candidates were aware that the extract offered great opportunities to address AO2 and use textual references effectively. Many then discussed the wider text focusing much more on AO3. This was a sensible approach and worked very well in ensuring that all the assessment objectives were addressed fully. A small number of candidates did not move beyond the extract, or made rather fleeting references to the wider text. As this is a whole text response, to access the higher mark levels candidates must spend a reasonable amount of their response considering the wider text.

Many responses offered close analysis of language, form and structure, using subject terminology effectively. There were some examples of candidates who spotted literary features and offered an example from the extract but failed to make any meaningful comments about how the use of such language or literary techniques enhanced the effect of the writing. At times subject terminology was used inappropriately with limited understanding of its implications in the writing. Some of the best analysis was offered at word and phrase level, simply commenting on the impacts and effects of individual words and phrases. This was particularly apparent in the responses to the extract-based question on 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' where the descriptions of the maid's peaceful contemplations and the sudden and violent attack on Carew gave great scope for AO2 analysis.

The vast majority of responses showed understanding of relevant contextual knowledge and were able to use it effectively to support their analysis of the text when answering the question. Occasionally learned context was too dominant in responses, and sometimes not used particularly relevantly. Candidates should realise that a little contextual knowledge goes a long way in a response to a literary text and that contextual knowledge and understanding should be revealed in their discussion of the characters, situations, incidents and relationships rather than 'bolted-on' to the response.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Question No 1: Anita and Me

Part (a): (Unseen extract: The Stepmother's Diary)

This was a slightly less popular option as a taught text, although a number of candidates had attempted this question in error before attempting another text (presumably their taught one). The extract set, where Meena is told that Nanima will be returning to India, is a pivotal moment in the novel which reveals that Meena has grown up and is able to deal with upsetting situations in a much more controlled way than she has in the past. The unseen extract from 'The Stepmother's diary also looked at a child dealing with a difficult situation in the form of Isobel who is upset when her father marries Sappho. Many candidates were able to make insightful or perceptive links between the texts citing the presentation of Meena's initially dramatic response revealed through the first sentences, but noting that all of her objections and screaming takes place 'in my head'. This was then compared to Isobel, a younger child, who is unable to keep her emotions under control, instead wanting her father's attention and holding his hand through the wedding ceremony after waking up from nightmare to phone him in the early morning on his wedding day. Comparisons were drawn between the ages of the children in the extracts, with most candidates recognising that Isobel is clearly younger than Meena. Many candidates also felt that Meena's situation was less traumatic than Isobel's, whose father is marrying again after her mother's death. Meena's considerable attempts to keep her thoughts to herself and pretend to be cheerful and understanding were explored and compared to Isobel's need for reassurance and security. Relevant comparisons of perspectives were made through comparing the first person narrative in 'Anita and Me', which enable Meena to share her feelings more immediately, to the first person narrative of Isobel's step-mother in the unseen text where Sappho is presented as a sympathetic and concerned narrator who can foresee problems in the future, but Isobel's thoughts are unknown. Many candidates also compared the sense of comedy in 'Anita and Me' with Meena's attempts to be cheerful and Sunil's 'frightened owlish face' to the much more serious undertones of 'The Stepmother's Diary' where Isobel dreams that Sappho is a 'shape-shifter…and started to eat you alive'. The most successful responses were able to draw on the many opportunities to compare the situations and how the characters dealt with them, as well as analysing the language and structure of the extracts. They achieved interwoven comparison and used precise textual references to support the response. Weaker responses tended to deal with the extracts separately perhaps drawing some relevant but more obvious comparisons between them. They were able to describe the situations and how the characters dealt with them, but missed the subtler clues in the extracts.

Part (b): Anita and Me

Candidates selected a range of moments from the novel where Meena shows her bravery. Popular moments included her time in hospital after breaking her leg, and when she stands up to Sam Lowbridge over his racist comments. Some candidates also explored her final decision to end her friendship with Anita. Stronger responses focused on a moment in detail, analysing language and structure to explore Meena's thoughts and actions fully and analyse how her bravery is presented by Syal. Less successful responses tended to describe a moment from the text with some relevant observations, or offer a rather superficial overview of Meena's behaviour without focusing on the question properly. A lack of textual references was also a feature of weaker responses where it became clear that candidates did not have a secure knowledge of the wider text. As this is a closed text response, candidates do need to spend time preparing key moments from the text to build up secure content knowledge upon which to base their responses. A few candidates used the extract to respond to part (b) which did not allow them to access any marks.

Question 2: Never Let Me Go

Part (a): (Unseen extract: The Year of the Runaways)

This was a reasonably popular text and elicited a large number of impressively analytical responses. The extract from the taught text was the moment the clones arrive at the cottages after leaving Hailsham and are feeling rather insecure about the reception they receive from Keffers and the veterans. The unseen extract from 'The Year of the Runaways' focuses on Tochi, a new arrival to the UK who arrives at the house he will share with other immigrants and receives a mixed reception. The extracts offered many opportunities for comparison and this question was generally very well done. Direct comparisons were made about how the arrivals are greeted in the extracts, with many candidates citing the way that the clones clung to their group identity and 'stood together in a huddle' whereas Tochi faces his fate alone, walking in and closing the door while ignoring the other people in the house. Many candidates were able to see that while moving to the cottages is part of a tightly constructed plan for the clones, Tochi's situation is far less predictable or secure. They also compared the hostility shown to Tochi by Gurpreet to Keffer's 'odd irritated mutter' about the students. Both the veterans and Randeep were viewed as people who are willing to help the arrivals in the extracts, although stronger responses recognised that while the veterans are simply being friendly and helpful, Randeep has a much more deep-seated need for a 'friend' in the UK and hopes that Tochi will fulfil that need. Many found his gesture of giving Tochi his 'best blanket' very moving. Kathy's retrospective narrative compared to the third person narrative of the unseen extract gave candidates plenty of scope to compare the structure and language of the extracts. Many were also able to compare the more warm and excitable tone of the first extract with the cold, unfriendly tone of the second. There were few weaker responses to this question, but occasionally they were less developed in the way that they addressed language and structure or dealt with the extracts more separately instead of interweaving the comparisons.

Part (B): Never Let Me Go

Candidates selected a range of moments to explore the students facing an unfamiliar situation. Popular choices of moment included Miss Lucy telling the students more about their fate and that they have 'been told and not told', looking for Ruth's possible, Kathy's thoughts at the end of the novel and Tommy and Kathy's visit to Madame. The vast majority of responses focused on one moment and analysed it in detail. Many of the candidates had admirable knowledge and understanding of the text and were able to analyse language and structure most effectively, even in this closed text part of the response. There were very few instances of unnecessary contextual exploration which is not assessed in this part of Section A. There were a few weaker responses which tended to be a little descriptive or undeveloped.

Question 3: Animal Farm

Part (a): (Unseen extract: How the Trouble Started)

This was a popular question and the majority of candidates approached this question on how characters in authority are presented with confidence. The extract displays Squealer's manipulation of the other animals when he explains that the rumours about Boxer being taken by the 'Horse Slaughterer' are wicked and untrue because Napoleon actually sent him to the vets and paid for him to have excellent care on his deathbed. The unseen extract focuses on the memory of an eight-year-old boy being told that he has killed another child by accident in a collision. The extracts offered many opportunities for comparison and the most successful responses focused on the main difference: that in the first extract the animals are lied to but believe the lies, whereas in the unseen extract the child is told the truth but refuses to believe it. Some weaker responses missed this significant contrast but were still able to draw other relevant comparisons between the way the figures of authority are presented. Many recognised Squealer's manipulative tactics and made some very good points about his use of language,

rhetorical questions and exclamations. They were able to appreciate the way that the extract is structured to reveal the animal's relief in the second paragraph when Squealer has allayed their fears and allowed their last doubts to dissipate. Lots of comparisons were made to the narrator in the unseen extract's refusal to believe what he is told and his references to adults lying about Father Christmas and the Tooth Fairy to convince himself that this is another such lie. The best responses were able to cite his clear shock and the traumatic reaction he is having to the situation he finds himself in. Weaker responses focused more on the taught extract than the unseen, sometimes finding it difficult to draw clear comparisons. There was occasional misreading of both extracts, with weaker responses claiming that Squealer is telling the truth to the other animals, or that the police officer in the unseen extract is lying.

Part (b): Animal Farm

Candidates selected a number of moments from the novel where the pigs change the truth to suit themselves. Popular moments included the disappearance of the milk and apples, the mass slaughter of the animals, the lies told about Snowball and the changing of the commandments. Many candidates looked at several of these moments but these responses tended to be quite superficial and descriptive. The more successful responses looked at one moment in detail and took opportunities to analyse language and structure. Many part (b) responses to 'Animal Farm' included unnecessary contextual information, often allowing it to dominate the response. As AO3 is not assessed at all in this question, it could only be credited if it was completely relevant to the question; there were few instances where this was the case as most of the contextual knowledge offered focused on the Russian Revolution rather than the text of Animal Farm. A lack of textual references was also a feature of weaker responses where it became clear that candidates did not have a secure knowledge of the wider text. As this is a closed text response, candidates do need to spend time preparing key moments from the text to build up secure content knowledge upon which to base their responses. Some responses failed to focus on the question – how the pigs change the truth to suit themselves – instead writing a general response on the Napoleon's tyranny, the confessions and slaughters, or the allegorical use of the Russian Revolution in the text. Candidates should be reminded that they must use their knowledge of the text to focus sharply on the question in these part (b) responses in Section A of this paper. A few candidates used the extract to respond to part (b) which did not allow them to access any marks.

Question 4: An Inspector Calls

Part (a): (Unseen extract: Di and Viv and Rose)

This was a very popular question which was accessible to candidates across the ability range. The extract was Sheila handing back her engagement ring to Gerald after finding out about his affair with Daisy Renton and candidates were asked to compare it to an extract where Viv is trying to explain her marriage to a gay man to her best friend, Di. Most candidates were able to identify the serious tone of the taught extract and compare it to the light-hearted and comic tone of the unseen extract where Viv and Di can barely finish their sentences due to laughter. The different contexts were usually appreciated as the unseen extract was clearly a more modern setting. Stronger responses focused on the mature and calm attitude adopted by Sheila in her dialogue with Gerald, comparing it to Viv's growing hysteria until she is 'mangled with laughter'. They were also able to appreciate the formality of Sheila's engagement compared to Viv's sudden and rash decision to marry her best friend where the marriage lasted 'the entire fortnight'. Many stronger responses cited the irony that Viv and her partner were 'so in tune' and had 'been going around together for years' yet couldn't discuss 'the problem for our marriage that he was gay'. This was compared to the lack of honesty in Sheila and Gerald's relationship where she 'knew there was something fishy' but her appreciation of his 'honesty' at this point in the play. The reactions of other characters were also compared insightfully: Mr Birling's attempts to interfere and Sheila's immediate rejection of his attempts, compared to Di's more light-hearted interjections and ultimate support. Weaker responses dealt with the extracts more separately and sometimes missed the comedic tone of the unseen extract, or misread Viv's situation and

thought that she was still married to her partner. Some candidates thought that Di was more critical of Viv in her comments such as 'You child' than the extract suggests. There were plenty of opportunities to explore AO2 though the stage-directions, use of pauses and interruptions and by comparing the more formal language in the taught extract to the chatty language of the unseen extract. Sheila's abrupt interruption when Mr Birling tries to defend Gerald was often compared to Viv and Di's continuous interruptions, the former causing tension and the latter demonstrating how comfortable they are in their friendship.

Part (b): An Inspector Calls

Candidates were asked to choose another moment in the play where a difficult relationship is presented dramatically by the writer. There were many possible relationships to choose from but the majority of candidates opted for Eric and either his father or mother, or Sheila and Eric's relationship with their parents at the end of the play. Other popular choices were Mr Birling and the Inspector, or Eric and Eva Smith. The latter was rather problematic, as she never appears in the play, but some candidates used details and lines from filmed versions of the play in an attempt to address the question. Some candidates tried to look at several moments which sometimes led to rather generalised responses where there was little attempt to address AO2. There were some instances where candidates did not focus fully on the question, instead focusing on differences in generational or political attitudes rather than how the difficult relationship was presented dramatically. These responses were sometimes very reliant on contextual knowledge about capitalist and socialist attitudes, but unless this knowledge was used to clearly focus on the dramatic presentation of the relationship, it was not rewardable. Candidates are expected to focus on AO2 in this part of the question so the best responses used precise textual references and were able to offer analysis of language and structure in their chosen moment. A lack of textual references was also a feature of weaker responses where it became clear that candidates did not have a secure knowledge of the wider text. As this is a closed text response, candidates do need to spend time preparing key moments from the text to build up secure content knowledge upon which to base their responses. A few candidates used the extract to respond to part (b) which did not allow them to access any marks.

Question 5: My Mother Said I Never Should

Part (a): (Unseen extract: Abigail's Party)

Examiners reported that none of the responses seen to this text included a viable part (b) which indicates that where this question was attempted candidates had not studied the text. Some candidates may have been attracted to this part (a) question due to the situations presented where they were asked to compare how conflict between the older and younger generations is presented in the extracts. Because candidates who attempted this question had not studied the whole text, examiners did not see any very strong responses. Some candidates wrote reasonably well on the taught extract and were able to see the conflict between Jackie and her mother, Margaret, caused by different generational attitudes to sexual relationships and Margaret's persistence in treating Jackie 'like a child'. They were also able to see how conflict is created when Jackie accuses her mother of reading her diary yet avoiding having any kind of intimate conversation with her, preferring to 'go round the garden centre'. Some relevant comparisons to the unseen extract were offered, particularly Beverly's more enlightened attitudes to young people's relationships when compared to Margaret: "Any excuse for a rave-up…' and 'you're better letting her go out with as many blokes as she wants to at that age..'. Few responses made any meaningful comments about language and structure. The weakest responses did not compare the texts but made a few relevant comments.

Part (b): My Mother Said I Never Should

Examiners did not see any responses to this part of the question other than where candidates tried to use the extract set for part (a). These responses could not be credited.

Question 6: DNA

Part (a): (Unseen Extract: Why is John Lennon Wearing a Skirt?)

This was a slightly less popular text, but examiners did see a number of responses to this question. Candidates were asked to compare how relationships between girls and boys are presented in the two extracts. The first extract was Leah's monologue at the beginning of the play where Phil ignores her and eats an ice-cream, and the unseen extract was a monologue where a fourteen-year-old girl explains how girls and boys behave at a school dance. The strongest responses were able to compare the tension created in the extract from DNA where Leah is desperately trying to get Phil's attention by asking a series of questions to which she gets no response. Many candidates commented on her insecurity and lack of confidence as she becomes increasingly self-critical during the monologue. Many responses suggested that Phil is the character with all the power, linking it to stereotypical gender roles and the hierarchies presented in the play. Candidates made some relevant links to the unseen extract where the dance hall is compared to a 'shooting gallery at a fairground' citing that as 'the boys have the rifles and the girls are the targets' there are similar attitudes towards gender and power in this extract. However, good responses also pointed out that later in the extract the language used by the girls balances this power: 'Shove off, spotty!' and 'Nobody's taking the blindest bit of notice of him.'. On the whole, candidates could see that whereas Phil's behaviour is deliberately controlling, the situation at the school dance is presented much more comically and suggests that life can be challenging for both girls and boys at the age of fourteen. Weaker responses tended to describe the extracts offering textual references but not analysing the language or structure to address the question. There was some confusion about where the extract from DNA fitted in to the wider text with some candidates alluding to the characters' reactions to Adam's death. This extract takes place before Phil and Leah have been told about the 'accident'. The weakest responses did not compare the texts but made a few relevant comments. A few responses did not address the unseen extract at all.

Part (b)

Candidates selected a range of moments from the play where there are difficulties in communication. Popular moments included Cathy's explanation of showing her 'initiative' resulting in a man being arrested for Adam's murder, or Leah's monologue where she tries to strangle herself. The stronger responses focused on a moment in detail, analysing language and structure to explore and analyse how difficulties in communication are presented. Less successful responses tended to describe a moment from the text with some relevant observations, or offer a rather superficial overview of the moment chosen without focusing on the question properly. A lack of textual references was also a feature of weaker responses where it became clear that candidates did not have secure or wide knowledge of the whole text. Some candidates used very inaccurate or completely made-up quotations. As this is a closed text response, candidates do need to spend time preparing key moments from the text to build up secure content knowledge upon which to base their responses.

Section B

Question 7: Great Expectations

This was a popular question and examiners reported seeing a number of excellent responses which used the given extract very well and demonstrated wide knowledge of the whole text as they mapped the changing relationship between Pip and Magwitch. Other candidates looked at one or two moments in the wider text in more detail to show how their relationship develops. The

weakest responses only looked at Pip's relationship with Magwitch at the start of the novel, in the extract and their meetings earlier when he threatens Pip and when Pip steals the food for him. This limited the scope of the response, as they were unable to trace the development of their relationship later in the novel. The extract offered plenty of opportunities for candidates to address AO2. The subtle way that Magwitch is described contemplating his actions as 'he stood before the fire looking thoughtfully at it' and Pip's narrative where he calls Magwitch 'my convict' and notes that he 'never looked at me, except that once' gave rise to some interesting analysis of Magwitch's thought-processes and determination to protect Pip from a draconian penal system, as well as the suggestion of a bond between them at this point. Magwitch's confession and Joe's humane response after which something 'clicked in the man's throat again' were cited as key moments where Magwitch becomes determined to repay Pip for his kindness and generosity of spirit. Magwitch turning his back at the end of the extract and his refusal to look at Pip were taken as signs that he knows he must protect him from any suspicion at all. The links made to the wider text were varied but tended to include Magwitch's visit to London where he reveals that he is Pip's benefactor, Pip's involvement in his attempted escape, and the tenderness with which Pip treats him on his deathbed. The strongest responses were wide-ranging, used precise quotations and offered some highly perceptive analysis. Some responses were less analytical but still knowledgeable and detailed. Some responses were too weighted towards AO3 and offered detailed biographical explanations of Dickens' childhood and his hatred of the justice system or lengthy information about the way criminals were treated in Victorian England. Although relevant comments on social and historical context are useful, they must be fully linked to observations on the text itself rather than bolted-on to the response. There were very few weaker responses seen to this question and they tended to be brief and undeveloped or narrative, finding little to say about the extract or wider text.

Question 8: Great Expectations

In this discursive question candidates were asked to discuss whether 'Pip is more of a snob than a gentleman'. This was a popular question and candidates argued very passionately for both sides, although most conceded that at different times in the novel he behaves as both a snob and a gentleman. Responses tended to be wide-ranging and look at the whole text, tracing Pip's journey from the small boy on the marshes to a London gentleman who learns hard lessons about himself in the process. Many responses focused on his attitudes towards others, his love for Estella, his treatment of Joe and Biddy and his friendship with Herbert Pocket. Responses at all levels showed a very secure understanding of the plot and characters but varied in the levels of analysis and comment they could offer. The strongest responses offered precise interwoven quotations, some sensitive analysis of the structure of the novel and the language used by Dickens and were underpinned by sensitive understanding of the historical and social context. Some responses were more descriptive, but still offered clear understanding of the novel and made relevant comments about Pip's treatment of other characters. They were secure in their understanding of gentlemanly virtues and the traits of snobbery displayed by Pip. Their focus on AO2 tended to be based on the structure of Pip's journey rather than language analysis. Few weaker responses were seen to this question, but where they were reported, they tended to be very narrative, or brief and undeveloped.

Question 9: Pride and Prejudice

This was a popular question and examiners reported seeing a number of very knowledgeable and focused responses. The extract was taken from the part of the novel in which Elizabeth is shown around Pemberley by Mrs Reynolds and hears her praise of Mr Darcy. The question required candidates to explore how Austen presents Elizabeth's opinion of Darcy in the extract and elsewhere in the novel. This was a question that clearly appealed to candidates and many wrote very convincingly about how Elizabeth reacts in the extract, using it for opportunities to explore AO2. Her 'increasing astonishment' during the extract was explored fully through analysis at word and phrase level, such as 'most extraordinary, most opposite', 'firmest opinion', 'almost stared', and 'listened, doubted and was impatient for more'. The best responses cited

Elizabeth's clear desire to hear more throughout the extract linking it to her feelings for Darcy. There were many opportunities to move beyond the extract and many candidates took Mrs Reynold's reference to 'wild young men' to explore Elizabeth's relationship with Wickham and her eagerness to believe his lies about Darcy. Many also looked at Darcy's behaviour towards Elizabeth earlier in the novel and his comments on her social status in his first marriage proposal. The strongest responses were wide-ranging, used precise quotations and offered some highly perceptive analysis. Some responses were less analytical but still knowledgeable and detailed. Generally contextual understanding was evident in the analysis of the extract and references to the wider text and there were few instances of candidates including irrelevant learned contextual knowledge on this text. There were very few weak responses to this question seen.

Question 10: Pride and Prejudice

The discursive question on this text was less popular but examiners reported seeing some very good responses. Candidates were asked to explore how far the Bennet family are an embarrassment to Elizabeth. Most responses to this question focused on Mrs Bennet, highlighting moments where she clearly embarrasses Elizabeth, and fails to control Lydia and Kitty's behaviour resulting in Lydia's elopement with Wickham. Many also cited Mary's general lack of social graces and her prolonged and dubious piano playing as embarrassing. Mr Bennet tended to be given more forgiving treatment, although some of the best responses did point out that his tendency to hide and avoid the embarrassment is not always helpful to Elizabeth either. Jane was usually viewed as Elizabeth's soulmate and support. Responses tended to be balanced in view and conclude that some member of the Bennet family are embarrassing but others are not. AO3 was addressed very naturally here through considerations of social etiquette and class. The strongest responses were engaged, lively and analytical demonstrating wide knowledge and understanding of the text. Responses in the middle range tended to be less analytical but include relevant comments, addressing the question with some textual support. Weaker responses went through each member of the family offering some relevant comments.

Question 11: The War of the Worlds

This was a reasonably popular question where candidates were asked to explore how Wells presents humankind's feelings of superiority in an extract from the beginning of the novel and elsewhere. The extract offered opportunities for exploring both AO3 and AO2. Many candidates were able to refer to the context of the British Empire in their responses as well as developments in science in the nineteenth century. Some responses became too weighted towards AO3 instead of focusing on the question and analysing the extract closely. A feature of weaker responses was moving through the extract paraphrasing it with long quotations included. These responses did not demonstrate secure understanding. Stronger responses focused on the retrospective narrative and analysed the scientific language which likened humankind to 'transient creatures that swarm and multiply' and descriptions of the Martians as 'intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic. They were also able to analyse the full implications and irony of humankind's belief that 'there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves...'. Examiners reported a number of responses where candidates did not seem to be particularly familiar with this extract despite it being the opening of the novel. These responses often struggled to make many meaningful comments beyond the most obvious. Candidates also struggled to comment in detail on other moments in the text. Many referred to the crowd around the pit after the first cylinder falls and the assumption that it posed no danger. There were also some good references to the attempts to fight the Martians with conventional and inferior weaponry and people's assumptions that the army would sort them out. However, many references to the wider text were rather undeveloped or descriptive and didn't address the assessment objectives fully.

Question 12: The War of the Worlds

This discursive question asked candidates to consider how far they agree that The War of the Worlds is a novel about the horrors of war. Examiners reported seeing very few responses to this questions. This is puzzling, as many candidates who attempted question 11 seemed unfamiliar with the extract and may have found more opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through attempting this question instead. Those who did this question found many moments from the novel to explore. The most popular moments were the first use of the heat-ray, the attack at Shepperton, the use of the black smoke in London, the exodus from London, the narrator trapped in the cellar, and the narrator's observations of the destruction caused by the Martian invasion at the end of the novel. Many candidates were able to look at two or more of these moments in detail, analysing language and offering relevant observations about the different ways in which Wells explores the different horrors of war in the novel. The strongest responses were wide-ranging, used precise quotations and offered some highly perceptive analysis. Some responses were less analytical but still knowledgeable and detailed. Generally contextual understanding was evident in the understanding of the ways in which war affects individuals and society. There were few instances of bolted-on AO3 in responses to this question. There were some weaker responses to this question and they tended to be brief and undeveloped.

Question 13: The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

This was the most popular question on this paper. The extract was the murder of Danvers Carew and candidates were asked to explore Stevenson's presentation of horrific events in the extract and elsewhere in the novel. This was very accessible extract and task and candidates generally addressed the question well across the full range of ability. The extract offered a number of opportunities for explanation and analysis of AO2. The strongest responses focused on the structure of the extract as well as analysing individual words and phrases used to present horrific events. They contrasted the peace and tranquillity experienced by the maid at the beginning of the extract when she 'fell into a dream of musing' and 'never had felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world' then traced the gradual development of suspense and tension through the contrasting descriptions of the two men and their meeting before the sudden onslaught of Hyde's violent attack. Responses in the middle range tended to start with the pathetic fallacy of the fog rolling 'over the city' then jump straight to the attack rather than look at how the extract was deliberately structured for effect. There were many good explanations and analysis of language offered with phrases such as 'great flame of anger', 'like a madman', 'clubbed him to the earth', 'ape-like fury', hailing down a storm of blows' and 'bones were audibly shattered' providing plenty of opportunities for candidates of all abilities to show understanding and use appropriate subject terminology. Weaker responses tended to pick out appropriate words and phrases, sometimes accurately identifying a literary technique but offering rather general explanations that did not consider the phrase within the overall context of the extract. Opportunities to look at the wider text were varied but the most popular moment chosen was the trampling of the little girl at the beginning of the novel. Most candidates were able to find relevant parallels between the two moments in the novel with the strongest responses focusing on the development of Hyde's savagery between the two incidents. There was some misreading in the weakest responses where candidates confused the murder of Carew with the trampling of the girl, or claimed that the girl was also murdered by Hyde at the beginning of the novel. Some very weak responses referred to other murders and violent crimes committed by Hyde that do not feature in the novel and had presumably been gleaned from a filmed adaptation. The strongest responses tended to look at more than one moment in the novel, many referring to Lanyon's response to seeing Hyde transform back into Jekyll and his subsequent death, or Utterson and Enfield seeing Jekyll at the window. Occasionally responses drifted from the question, which required candidates to focus on events, instead focusing on use of settings, darkness and doors to create suspense and horror. Others developed the maid's dislike of Hyde into a general discussion of how people respond to him on first sight in the novel, leading to a discussion of duality and a rather general response on Hyde. Generally, candidates

were able to include relevant contextual details through their analysis of the extract which offered opportunities to show understanding of etiquette and gentlemanly behaviour, the primitive and animalistic nature of Hyde, which many candidates linked to Darwin, or fear of violent crime on dark London streets linked to Jack the Ripper. Other less relevant contextual information was included in many responses, with some candidates discussing the maid's lack of status as a woman in Victorian England and one of the few female characters in the novel, or Victorian religious beliefs and fear of the devil, linked to 'flame of anger'. Some candidates wrote at length about prostitution in Victorian England assuming that Carew made an indecent proposition to Hyde and that the little girl was a child prostitute. These assertions could not be fully supported by the extract or wider text.

Question 14: The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

This discursive question asked candidates to consider how far they agree with the assertion that the novel shows that no person can be completely good. This was a less popular question presumably because the majority of candidates who had studied this text were more attracted to the extract-based question. Examiners reported seeing some strong responses to this question which mainly focused on the theory of duality explored in the novel through the presentation of Dr Jekyll and his creation of Mr Hyde. They were able to analyse the reasoning offered by Jekyll for needing Hyde as an outlet for his 'concealed pleasures' and his argument about the dual nature of man. They traced his gradual inability to control Hyde and the idea that failing to control the part of himself that is not good becomes his undoing. Weaker responses tended to focus on other characters trying to argue that everyone in the novel is flawed. This often led to slightly unconvincing claims about Utterson, Enfield and Lanyon. The strongest responses were wide-ranging, used precise quotations and offered some highly perceptive analysis. Some responses were less analytical but still knowledgeable and detailed. Generally contextual understanding was evident in the understanding of the exploration of duality in the novel. There were few instances of bolted-on AO3 in responses to this question. There were some weak responses to this question and they tended to be brief and undeveloped.

Question 15: Jane Eyre

This was a less popular question but examiners reported seeing a number of thoughtful responses. There were also some weaker responses which did not use the opportunities for analysis offered in the extract fully. The extract was taken from the point in the novel where Jane first hears Bertha's laugh as she is shown around Thornfield Hall by Mrs Fairfax. The question required candidates to explore how Bronte presents the theme of secrecy in the extract and elsewhere in the novel. Many candidates commented on the descriptions of the setting linking the 'trap door', attic', 'narrow garret staircase', long passage' and 'one window' to the conventions of gothic literature in terms of a setting which hides secrets and builds up suspense. The descriptions of Bertha's 'curious laugh; distinct, formal, mirthless' and 'as tragic, as preternatural a laugh as any I have ever heard' offered many opportunities for candidates to analyse AO2. Mrs Fairfax's immediate and instinctive response to blame Grace Poole offered opportunities to discuss the secrecy surrounding Rochester and Thornfield Hall in the wider text. Many candidates also explored Jane's attempt to marry Rochester, the fire in Rochester's bed chamber, the attack on Mason, or the deceit of Mrs Reed, Jane's aunt. The strongest responses were wide-ranging, used precise quotations and offered some highly perceptive analysis. Some responses were less analytical but still knowledgeable and detailed. Generally contextual understanding was evident in the analysis of the extract and references to the gothic tradition and there were few instances of candidates including irrelevant learned contextual knowledge on this text.

Question 16: Jane Eyre

This discursive question was reasonably popular for candidates who had studied this text. Many looked at the notion of 'a love story' more widely than the question may have implied, considering the lack of love shown to Jane in her childhood and early adult life. This was an acceptable approach when linked with Jane's later attitudes to love. Responses to this question were often argued very passionately seeing Jane as a woman who has to suffer many hardships in her pursuit of the right to be loved and to love. Many focused on her relationship with Rochester and her failed attempt to marry him. They then compared the loveless proposal by St John Rivers and his rather practical approach to marriage. Many cited Jane's trials with Rochester as essential in her growth as an independent woman and argued that she can only return to Rochester as his equal due to the feminist message of the novel. The strongest responses were wide-ranging, used precise quotations and offered some highly perceptive analysis. Some responses were less analytical but still knowledgeable and detailed. Generally contextual understanding was evident in the understanding of the exploration of Jane's growth as a woman in the novel. There were few instances of bolted-on AO3 in responses to this question. There were some weak responses to this question and they tended to be brief and undeveloped, or lack focus on the question.

J352/02 Exploring poetry and Shakespeare

General Comments:

Examiners enjoyed the freshness and variety of responses by candidates to this paper. This is a very different specification, and the approach to marking has reflected that, with a conscious desire to give positive reward for achievement against the new assessment objectives wherever possible. The emphasis has been on awarding evidence of skills and how they are used, rather than the parade of knowledge for its own sake.

We were aware from the beginning that this was a different cohort from that in previous series. This is an untiered paper, and many weaker candidates are now entered for Literature who would in the past have been entered for English, and would have studied far less Literature, let alone historical texts of the complexity of those on this paper. It was pleasing to see that the open questions and the approach to marking allowed some reward for the commitment, personal engagement and contact with the texts among even the more straightforward responses.

The structure of the paper and the skills awarded are almost identical to Component 01, although the texts are different. The approach to marking, annotation and award was therefore the same across the papers, allowing comparability of outcome, and it was pleasing to see that achievement across the papers was very similar.

The majority of candidates were clearly familiar with the structure of the papers and the new form of assessment and coped remarkably well with the longer papers, the need to quote from memory and the evaluative nature of the tasks. For most, this proved an opportunity to express their personal responses, show the depth of their understanding of the texts, permit very wide and varied textual reference and advance an individual argument. Very few were unable to finish in the time provided or made no response to Section B, and assessors were impressed by the length, complexity and range of reference in the responses.

The new mark scheme worked effectively in distinguishing different levels of attainment. Most candidates were at some point in the paper able to develop reasonable personal responses to the texts and tasks, with some effective explanation of language, form and structure. Many demonstrated some critical style through analytical comment or clarity of understanding, supported by appropriate textual detail. An impressive number of responses were convincing in argument, perceptive in response to the texts, and sensitive to language, context and interpretative complexity.

Centres and teachers are to be congratulated very warmly on their hard work on preparing candidates, and candidates themselves on the evident rigour of their preparation. Assessors reported that they themselves were inspired to think about these texts in fresh ways by the scholarship, engagement and individuality of the responses.

Section A: Poetry Across Time

In part (a) of this section, candidates are required to compare a poem from their taught Anthology cluster to an unseen poem related to the topic of the cluster. The weighting of the marks in this section emphasises AO2, the analysis of language, form and structure using the terminology of the subject, but also places a strong emphasis on AO1, which combines understanding, integrated textual reference and personal reference.

Linking the ‘unseen’ element of the paper thematically and stylistically to a studied poem allowed candidates to show their comparative and analytical skills without the scale of the task overwhelming them. These part (a) responses were often the longest in the paper. The

crossover with the analytical, evaluative and comparative skills also taught in preparation for the English Language paper was evident in the approach to language and structure, and to comparison of linked texts. These high-order skills are clearly being very well taught. Although their level of demand is a stretch for GCSE students, especially in comparison with past specifications, there was plenty of evidence that candidates are being well prepared for further studies. Several examiners reported responses that would have been strong at A level.

The 'Conflict' cluster proved the most popular, but 'Love and Relationships' also received plenty of attention. A smaller, but still significant, number of candidates chose the thematically challenging poems in the 'Youth and Age' cluster. They had clearly been very well taught and responded in interesting ways to the often more experimental poems in this cluster, and to its more 'open' topic.

In this paper, the poems chosen as 'unseens' were all written by poets represented by other works within the studied cluster. Some candidates noticed this and were able to see thematic or stylistic similarities, although this was not part of the assessment. Certainly this choice would have helped candidates to deal with the challenge of the 'unseen' in the first year of the specification, but it should not be taken as an indication of future choices, as the range of unseen poems in the Practice papers makes clear.

Candidates took a variety of approaches to 'scaffolding' and organising their responses. Some chose to consider one poem, either taught or unseen, in some detail first before beginning to compare to the second poem. This is a valid approach to comparative tasks, but the mark scheme particularly rewards sustained and interwoven comparison, so such responses might best begin with an introductory overview comparing similarities of theme, ideas, attitudes and style before looking in detail at what makes poems individual and different. Most candidates compared the texts throughout their response. The only danger of this approach is that it can sometimes get in the way of clear understanding of either poem. This task requires some planning and a reasonable overview of the meaning of each poem before beginning to write, although examiners enjoyed the individual and exploratory way in which candidates constructed meaning for texts as they engaged with them. In many cases the understanding of the unseen poem proved to be more secure than that of the taught text.

In planning responses, many candidates made use of the bullet points to organise their answers. The bullets encourage an overview of points of similarity, and achieving some understanding of ideas and attitudes to a subject before exploring how tone and atmosphere are created for the reader by the writer's choices of structure and language. Some candidates felt that the bullet points demanded separate paragraphs on tone, atmosphere, language and structure. The problem with working through the bullets in this way is that it does not integrate response to language and structure within the response, and it sometimes led to paragraphs spotting rhetorical features or commenting on punctuation, verse form, rhyme scheme and sound effects which were not integrated with the meaning of the poem. Some improbable claims were made for the effect of punctuation (usually called caesura, whether it was or was not), for choice of verse form ('open' and 'closed' forms and what the poem looked like if turned through ninety degrees) and for the effects of enjambment and end-stopping. In poetry, as in prose, syntax supports meaning, so the rhythm of the whole sentence, as well as the rhythm of individual lines, needs to be followed until it stops. Reading poetry aloud helps to stress both this and the importance of stress and rhythmic pattern (usually more important in English poetry than rhymes or syllable counts).

More successful candidates addressed the bullet points and assessment objectives holistically, realising that poets make meaning out of words. They related the features of poetic language clearly to their effect on the reader, and their impact in making meaning and conveying tone and atmosphere. They also realised that structure is the way in which poets develop and communicate ideas and attitudes, so they integrated their response to structure within their overall argument, showing understanding that poems don't end in the same place where they

began. The best way to treat the bullet points might be to see them as encouraging an initial thematic overview of both poems before moving on to a detailed comparative analysis exploring how language and structure create meaning.

There was some evidence of a misreading of AO2's requirement to use relevant subject terminology. The focus for teaching should be on using terminology in a relevant way. Some candidates seemed to feel that the mere identification of rhetorical devices would itself be rewarded. Terms such as 'anaphora', 'oxymoron' and 'juxtaposition' as well as 'ceasura' were over-used, often inaccurately, and some felt it necessary to include terms such as 'hendiadys', 'chiasmus', 'polyptoton', 'hyperbaton' or 'heteroglossia' in their responses. It is not necessary to include Greek or Latin terms to explore English poetry analytically and they rarely assist the clarity of argument or critical focus at this level. Examiners reward comment on the impact of figurative language, not its identification. Similarly, the identification of a 'semantic field' (usually and unsurprisingly related to the subject of the poem) is not significant without comment on its effect.

Most candidates had little difficulty in linking the poems effectively, and in making some comparisons of language, form and expression. There were very few who did not understand the comparative nature of this task, or that part (b) asks them to write about a single poem. However, some answers to part (a) were excessively long, and not necessarily to good effect. Candidates who spent too long on part (a) often wrote very short answers to part (b) or to Section B.

It is important to ensure that the time spent on tasks, and the length of responses, reflects their relative weighting. Some candidates did not seem aware that in Section A part (a) and part (b) carry equal marks, and that the Shakespeare response in Section B carries as many marks as the two parts of Section A combined. Some took the approach of answering Section B first, which was perfectly admissible, although it could sometimes mean that part (b) of Section A seemed rushed. Most candidates gather momentum during the course of the exam, but sensible planning is essential.

Unfortunately there were some rubric errors in this first year of a complex assessment. Candidates will need to be warned against these. A few attempted to compare the unseen with other poems in their cluster rather than the selected poem, perhaps because they did not know it. They could only be rewarded for what they said about the unseen. Similarly reference to other poems in the cluster within part (a) or comparison with the unseen in part (b) cannot be rewarded. Quite a number of scripts had no response at all to part (b). This may have been an error of timing, or because candidates did not have confidence in their ability to make a 'closed text' response to any of their taught poems. However, examiners are happy to reward any attempt at response, even if quotation is limited or inaccurate, and gave some credit even to those who sometimes confused two different poems, or wrote about more than one poem in their part (b) responses. What could not be credited were responses to part (b) which chose to write about a poem from a different cluster from part (a). Part (b), as in Paper One, is part of a single question, and in this case the question is about the studied cluster of poems from the Anthology, linked by theme. Candidates cannot choose to write about two poems they have never studied in part (a) and then revert to a studied text in part (b) while pretending that they are still answering the same question. Equally they need to be aware that attempting more than one question in Section A (or Section B) or combining a part (a) from one cluster with part (b) from another are rubric infringements: both answers will be marked, but only the higher mark will count.

In Part (b) of this section, candidates are required to choose another poem from their studied cluster to explore the question set. The question is related to part (a) but usually widens in scope. Indeed examiners reported seeing responses to part (b) on almost every poem in the Anthology, especially in the Love and Relationships cluster, and one of the delights of marking the paper was the individuality of answers and how well candidates expressed their personal response to the full range of poems from different historical periods. In this part of the question,

AO1 and AO2 are equally weighted, as it was not expected that candidates would be able to write in detail about language when tackling a 'closed' text. However, responses surprised assessors not only by the depth and accuracy of quotation but also the ability to link structure to overall meaning and engage with details of language and imagery.

It is important at this point to remind Centres that AO3 is not assessed in any part of Section A in this paper, a small difference from Paper One. Although candidates need to be aware that the historical context of Romantic and Victorian poems will influence aspects of meaning and style, there is no need to relate these poems to the social context which produced them. It is more important to explore the universal themes which they address. There is no reward for 'bolted on' context about the French Revolution or any particular wars or love affairs which the poems may or may not be influenced by. Context is only important in the study of poetry for this paper if it is intrinsic to the meaning of an individual poem. This especially applies to poet's biographies. Candidates are sometimes too keen to read all poems biographically, and to assume that the speakers in poems are identical to what Yeats called 'the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast'. Biographical information about Sylvia Plath's or Anne Sexton's depression, Edward Thomas's or Thomas Hardy's marriages, Wilfred Owen's time at Craiglockhart, Philip Larkin's love life or lack of it or the sexuality of James Fenton or Carol Ann Duffy, while perhaps helpful when guiding students to engage with the poetry, is only relevant if directly referenced in the poems themselves. We often use the shorthand of 'the poet' to describe the persona or speaker in a poem, if otherwise unidentified, but candidates need to be aware that this is usually a dramatisation rather a confession.

Some responses to part (b) were rather brief and underdeveloped. This was sometimes because the candidate had spent too long on part (a) but may also have indicated a lack of preparation, as candidates do need to learn quotations, and be able to comment on them for this part of Section A. Some candidates limited themselves by their choice of poem: able candidates did particularly well when they choose longer and more complex poems such as 'Punishment', 'A Broken Appointment', 'Honour Killing' and 'Spring and Fall'. Popular choices like 'A Poison Tree' and 'The Man He Killed', while memorable, need considerable complexity of approach to draw out deeper implicit meanings.

Some candidates certainly gained marks by their excellent preparation of this part of the paper. However, it was often the least successful section of the examination and would benefit from greater attention, with a strong focus on how language and structure relate to meaning and contribute to the power of these vivid and memorable poems.

Section B: Shakespeare

Examiners were especially impressed by the quality of response to Shakespeare's plays in this section. Candidates were clearly engaged by the complexity of Shakespeare's characters, from Juliet and Beatrice to Shylock and Lady Macbeth, the memorable expression of his language (as evidenced by the ability of candidates throughout the full range of ability to quote accurately) and the dynamic relationship between the playwright and the society which produced the audience for his drama. Shakespeare is clearly very well taught indeed, and teachers are using the full range of excellent resources produced by the theatre companies as well as publishers and the awarding body to support learning. There was impressive awareness of the plays as texts for performance and of the different ways in which characters and relationships could be interpreted in many answers.

Candidates could choose either an extract-based question leading to a whole-text based response or a discursive question on the whole text. In this paper, most of the questions were based around characters, as was the case in the sample assessment materials. However, the assessment strategy for this paper allows for a variety of question types, as was the case in the practice papers, establishing a precedent for future series. Candidates were very well prepared for the need to write about the whole play and move significantly beyond the extract. This is a

change of demand from previous specifications, but most candidates were more than able to cope with it. Indeed examiners reported that the discursive essays were almost as popular as the passage-based questions (which was not the case in the past) and across the range of ability. Candidates could choose either to make wide reference to other parts of the text involving the characters or topics addressed in the question or extract, or to focus their response around detailed close reading of two particular scenes. Either approach was equally successful. A valid approach to the extract-based question is to focus on close reading of language and structure in the extract, and then address AO1 through wider reference to the text. Candidates choosing the discursive essay needed to ensure their responses were sufficiently focused to include close response to AO2 in part of their answer. A particularly successful method was to memorise parts of key soliloquies and use these to show how characters are presented and developed. Another successful approach to AO2 in the discursive essay was to address it through a deep and developing awareness of how dramatic form and structure guides audience response to characters and ideas, and changes their perception at different parts of the play.

Most candidates were aware of the need to address the question in order to show individual response and deal fully with all the assessment objectives. There were some who struggled to adapt pre-prepared material, perhaps originally addressing a different question, to the tasks set. This was perhaps most evident in answers on *Macbeth*. Candidates need to be aware that not everything learnt will be relevant in an examination, and some selection and organisation of material is important. This especially applies to the requirement to address AO3. Candidates are clearly well-informed about Shakespeare's society, ranging from James I's views about witches to the contractual nature of marriage, and about his audience, generally viewed as shocked by anything which departed from the conventional (ignoring their partiality for Renaissance dramas with material far more overtly shocking than any of Shakespeare's). However, the mark scheme makes it clear that context is rewarded when it informs response to, or evaluation of the text. It is therefore important to ensure that context is relevant and well integrated within an argument. A useful rule to apply is that any context given a paragraph of its own without a link to any quotation or detail of the writing is unlikely to inform response or be relevant, and will receive little credit from examiners. The skills tested are those of literary criticism and not historical or sociological knowledge. So, for example, the contemporary understanding of the difference between kingship and tyranny was more relevant to Q8 than the Gunpowder Plot, and appreciation of the ways in which young people defy conventions and hierarchy in the comedies is more significant for exploration of the dramas than Elizabethan attitudes to marriage or homosexuality (to the extent that we know what these were).

The most popular Shakespeare play was *Macbeth* closely followed by *Romeo and Juliet. The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado About Nothing* produced far fewer responses but were nevertheless studied by a considerable number of candidates who were well-prepared by teachers enthusiastic about those texts. Teaching of all these plays can be helpfully supported by excellent film and television productions. It is important that students experience these plays as performances, and allow their dramatic nature to guide their responses. However, examiners reported a number of references to Lady Macbeth washing her hands in disinfectant, the fight at the petrol station, Jessica wearing Leah's ring and Claudio seeing Borachio at the window with the supposed Hero, all of which are scenes from films rather than Shakespeare's plays. The best responses to performance compared different ways of portraying characters such as Lady Macbeth, Lord Capulet, Shylock or Beatrice.

In this section of the question paper AO4 (vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation) is also addressed, and very few candidates were unable to achieve some reward under this assessment objective. This was usually because these candidates used no punctuation at all. Most achieved intermediate performance, writing with considerable range and accuracy to show general control. A smaller number achieved the consistency and effectiveness required for the highest mark. Handwriting is not assessed in this examination. Nevertheless, examiners wish to reiterate the plea for legible and carefully written responses. Quality of attainment is much more important than quantity of output, and candidates should not be afraid

to slow down, write less, think more and express themselves with greater clarity and legibility, as well as accuracy.

Examiners were delighted with the range of responses, the detailed knowledge of Shakespeare's play and the clear engagement and personal response to the impact these plays can still have on audiences today.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Question No 1: Love and Relationships

Part (a): *Morning Song* Sylvia Plath and *Hinterhof* James Fenton

All candidates were able to comment on the ways in which love was shown to change lives in 'Morning Song' and 'Hinterhof'. A few read Fenton's poem as celebrating a new birth rather than a new relationship, but that was no problem – very little in the text clearly indicates that this is not the case, and this approach did not prevent candidates from demonstrating unseen reading skills. Equally it did not matter that some read the poem as either a prequel or sequel to the studied 'In Paris With You' as long as they did not divert into unsupported speculation about the poet's love life: indeed it made for interesting responses to the portrayal of different emotions in relationship. A focus on relationship - the mother's responses to the baby and the poet's to a new person in his life – was helpful in establishing a drama of dependency and growing appreciation. Most responded to the words and especially the striking visual images of the poems without worrying too much about their context, or Plath's own experience of motherhood. Some found the Plath disturbingly disengaged or distanced. To some extent, this may have come from misreading the punctuation of the line 'I'm no more your mother' as if the sentence ends at that point instead of moving on into a beautiful image of the ephemeral nature of all individual lives. Others read all of its images as expressing delight in new life. The best responses saw ambivalence and development in the emotions expressed and compared this to Fenton's developing appreciation of a new dawn, the fire in the hearth and the rainbow after rain as emblems of rediscovered love after darker days. Some found a note of obsessiveness in the insistent declarations of 'Hinterhof', or explored elements of coldness about the images of the 'new stature' and the 'drafty museum' which showed sensitivity to language without contextual preconceptions. Some wrote better about the unseen poem than the taught text.

Part (b)

Candidates were able to select from a very broad range of poems in order to respond to the presentation of love changing the way the world is seen, for good or ill. The most popular choices were 'In Paris With You' and 'Long Distance II' but examiners saw responses to every poem within the cluster. Some were better suited to the question than others, and candidates can penalise themselves by their choice. The poems describing less happy experiences of love, such as 'Love and Friendship' and 'A Broken Appointment' needed quite a sophisticated approach to make them relevant to the question. However, those who realised how the question encouraged an interpretation of the ways in which imagery portrays emotion answered it well, with interesting readings of the relationship between the external world and inner feelings. There were powerful responses to 'Love After Love' showing how the recovery from love can also lead to changes in perception, or to the Harrison arguing that love ensures you refuse to see the world differently even after loss. Longer and complex poems such as 'An Arundel Tomb', 'Bright Star' and 'Now' are challenging to address as 'closed texts': those who did this well had very good knowledge of particular images or expressions and examined these with impressive precision and sensitivity. 'Warming Her Pearls' was another poem often addressed perceptively by those who attempted it. It was pleasing to see some warm responses to the emotions of the

speaker in Helen Maria Williams's 'A Song'. Like many, these interpreted the question as inviting a response to changing ways in which love can make you see the world, and this worked well as a way of charting development of feelings in a poem. Although Fenton's poem was the most popular choice, there was a tendency to stress the poem's apparent resentment of a previous relationship rather than to enjoy its humorous rejection of the clichés of romantic love.

Question 2: Conflict

Part (a): *The Destruction of Sennacherib* Byron and *The Last Laugh* Wilfred Owen

This was a very popular question, but again a surprising number of candidates seemed to respond better and with more knowledge as well as spontaneity to the unseen poem than to the taught poem. As in Q1 and Q3, familiarity with the author may have helped, although this should not be an expectation for future series. Lack of basic knowledge of the Biblical narrative which inspires the Byron was sometimes a problem for candidates not aware of who is fighting who, who gets killed and why. Those who had such knowledge were able to make interesting comparisons between the almighty power of God in Byron's poem and the weaponry getting the 'last laugh' in Wilfred Owen. The best responses to the latter were aware of the importance of the title, and many noticed the tone of mockery. Those who were aware that Byron's 'Hebrew Melody' is an act of poetic ventriloquism were able to explore ironies in both poems. Even those who took the Byron at face value were able to make interesting historical comparisons between past attitudes to war and the mechanical horrors and casual brutality of the Western Front. Some contrasted the mock-heroic immediacy of killing in Owen with the epic qualities of Byron's verse. There were very effective comparisons of the humiliated 'rider distorted and pale' and the lover-soldier whose 'whole face kissed the mud', while others compared the wailing widows of Ashur and the invocations of their loved ones by the dying to explore the results of killing. Both poems offered comparisons of the vanity and futility of conflict as well as its savagery. Those who focused on the latter were able to compare the 'wolf on the fold' with the personifications of the savage weaponry, hooting and hissing at their victims.

Part (b):

Popular choices were 'A Poison Tree', The Man He Killed' and 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'. Many who selected Owen did well in both sections, writing powerfully about language and imagery alongside tone and irony. Those who wrote about Blake often appeared to have memorised the poem, and wrote in detail. However, it was necessary to go beyond the surface narrative and explore the complexity and allusiveness of Blake's choice of imagery, both the tree itself and its 'bright' and alluring but poisonous apple, in order to achieve the higher marks. Many did so very profitably. Responses to Hardy were sometimes muddled, confusing some of its details with Douglas's 'Vergissmeinnicht' or assuming the poem was a personal recollection of war. However, most engaged with its colloquial expression of bafflement, with particular emphasis on the speaker's struggle to express why he killed a man he would otherwise treat to a 'nipperkin'. The best responses picked up how the speaker's language and references reveal that he has volunteered because he is both educationally and economically marginalised. There were also sensitive and well-informed responses to 'Lament' and 'What Were They Like', showing both understanding and insight into the choice of images and their emotive effect. 'Punishment' was selected by a small number of candidates, but some wrote very well about it. Others confused the 'Bog People' and the IRA, and struggled with the double time of this complex poem. Those who chose 'Honour Killing' were clearly powerfully affected by this poem, which is as challenging as Heaney in its comparison of timeless and modern conflicts, and wrote well about it, while aware that it portrays a metaphorical rather than a literal killing. 'Partition' is another poem which required good knowledge to adapt to the task. Other poems which do not overtly write about killing such as 'Boat Stealing', 'Phrase Book' were, wisely, rarely attempted. 'Flag' and Vergissmeinnicht' received more attention, but it was rarer to see responses which understood the whole poem rather than just a part of it. The ability to relate the part to the whole is important in this task, as AO1 is equally weighted with AO2.

Question 3: Youth and Age

Part (a): *Red Roses* Anne Sexton and The Chimney Sweep: *A little black thing among the snow* Blake

Fewer candidates studied this selection, but they were evidently well-prepared. *Red Roses* is a disturbing poem which candidates would not be confronted with as an unseen, but as a taught text it allows a sensitive approach to a challenging but important topic. The comparison with 'The Chimney Sweeper' allowed for interesting connections between the voices of the abused children, and their contrasting attitudes towards abusive parents and towards authorities (the 'nice lady' and the 'church') in addition to exploration of the powerful imagery and contrasting use of colour in both poems in order to express the unhappy situations of the children. As many pointed out, the tragedy of Tommy's situation is that he doesn't even know that he is unhappy, and feels he needs to cover up the truth, whereas the unhappy chimney sweeper is well aware that he has been clothed in 'the clothes of death' and expresses the irony of his calling ''Weep, 'weep!' while his parents praise God and the King. Without context, some struggled for precise understanding of the Blake, and felt the boy was complaining about being forced to dress up and go to church, although the title of this poem and their knowledge of 'Holy Thursday' should have helped them to appreciate images of innocence distorted by experience. Some compared this with the perversion of childish images in 'Red Roses' such as 'a broken scarecrow' and 'the leg, twisted like a licorice stick'. Some made very effective links between the song 'Red Roses for a Blue Lady' and the chimney sweeper's 'notes of woe'. Some compared Tommy's dance with the Blue Lady to the boy 'happy upon the heath' as neither is allowed to remain happy for long. The best answers sustained focus on the children and how they express themselves, rather than getting diverted into the reader's reaction or Sexton's biography.

Part (b):

Popular choices in response to this question included 'Cold Knap Lake' and 'Venus's Flytraps' and the context of this new form of assessment proved to be a productive way for candidates to explore complex but interesting poems from the previous anthology. The new form of assessment does not allow for a narrative approach or close paraphrase, but reward the ability to focus on particular details and analyse the effect of powerful expression, which worked especially well for these elusive poems which are ambiguous and can be interpreted in different ways. Good responses, stimulated by their work on part (a), concentrated on how the child's view of unhappy events is communicated. Some moved from the Blake in the unseen to write about 'Holy Thursday', but here it was important to explain why these children are unhappy: as orphans paraded by a hypocritical authority, they are not the symbol of innocence they appear to be. There were some sensitive readings of 'Out, Out-' which explored language as well as narrative and located unhappiness not just in the boy's accident and death but also in the fact that he was doing such dangerous work in the first place, and the matter-of-act tone with which his loss is treated. The unhappiness of separation from the mother in 'Baby Song' was the subject of some responses, sometimes effectively, although perhaps missing some of this poem's jaunty humour about primal experience and loss of innocence. The few who wrote about 'Farther' did not do so effectively: after all there is no expression of unhappiness in childhood in this poem. There were a few very good responses to 'Spring and Fall' and 'Midnight on the Great Western', pointing out the global nature of unhappiness in Hopkins, and the isolation, vulnerability and uncertain destination of the journeying boy in 'Midnight on the Great Western'.

Section B

Question 4: *Romeo and Juliet*

Examiners identified a number of approaches to the error in the question paper. After looking at candidates' responses, examiners were asked to group responses into six categories. The most frequent scenarios include answering the question literally – as it was written – or writing about Tybalt's hatred in general. A significant number of students also responded to the question as it should have appeared.

Whichever way candidates interpreted the question, most were able to write in some detail and with some understanding of the three scenes in which Tybalt appears and of their impact on the rest of the play. The approach to marking credited any response to the portrayal of Tybalt's hatred, and ignored any confusion between the two feuding houses.

Most candidates were impressively aware of Tybalt's 'fiery' nature and his role as a representation of 'hatred' and therefore of 'his function in the play as a catalyst for catastrophe' as one felicitously put it. Many saw his 'hate' as in direct juxtaposition to the theme of 'love', and the reason why the play turns from romance to death. Many used the Prologue effectively to make reference to the 'ancient grudge'. Some felt that it established that Romeo and Juliet's love is 'death-marked' from the beginning, and that the audience is therefore aware of ironies in the extract and the scene it comes from which escape the characters. There were fewer who pointed out the irony that this scene interrupts the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet, although some maintained that Tybalt is aware of their relationship (although there is no evidence for this in the play, as opposed to the Luhrmann film). Good answers showed engagement with the extract and its context, as well as other parts of the play, and avoided wider reference turning into a list of consequences. These addressed AO2 through close evaluation of Tybalt's language, repeating the offensive term 'villain', and the change in Lord Capulet's language which shows that he is incensed by Tybalt's refusal to take his orders. Such close responses also appreciated the contextual issues of hierarchy, 'shame' and honour addressed in this brief exchange. Many noticed that Capulet needs to resort to abusive language – 'boy', 'princox' – to get Tybalt to back down, and used the evidence of Tybalt's behaviour in the first scene and Act 3 to explain his resentment at any insult. A few even noticed how this prepares the audience for Capulet's sharp change of tone to Juliet later in Act 4, as the volatility of his character has been established. Most focused their wider reference on Act 3 Scene 1, sometimes referred to as 'the scene on the beach', to explain how this shows Tybalt's promise to convert seeming sweet intrusion into 'bitt'rest gall'. Often this was accompanied by strong understanding of the power of Mercutio's dying curse on both houses, and thoughtful examination of language which sees love converted into hatred, violence and death throughout the play. Many recognised the shadow which Tybalt's death casts on the whole play, with a few noting his body is still on stage in the Capulet's vault in the final scene. Many enjoyed enumerating the number of deaths consequent on the perceived slight to Tybalt's honour in the extract. Candidates showed very good and accurate knowledge of the events of the play, but their answers were more likely to attract higher marks if they accompanied this with appreciation of Shakespeare's poetry and stagecraft.

Question 5: *Romeo and Juliet*

Like Q9, this discursive question proved almost as popular as the extract-based question on the same text. These questions encourage an evaluative approach to the way in which characters develop and how an audience's perception of them changes in the course of the drama. This question tested the assessment objectives very thoroughly, as Juliet's submissive dialogue with her mother in Act 1 is very different from her rapturous response to Romeo's love and from her distraught reaction to his banishment. Strong answers paid particular attention to her soliloquy before taking the Friar's potion, and to her premonitions of ill fortune to suggest that she is not impulsive but fully aware of the dangers of her position. Most wanted to recount the rush and panic of her final moments. AO3 was fully addressed by most candidates who were very aware

of her position, caught between the two feuding families and oppressed by her position as a woman in the society of the time. They compared how she was expected to behave with her actions, and came to a variety of judgements about her rush towards marriage and to going along with what many thought an unlikely and dangerous plan by Friar Lawrence. Some pointed out both his influence and the Nurse's as contributing to the tragedy, while others felt Juliet was too rash as well as ill-advised, and too eager to complete Romeo's speculative sonnets for him. The majority were quite censorious, but there were vigorous defences of Juliet, arguing that it was others who acted from impulse, and that her actions are inspired by love, and a growing sense of maturity and independence. Some argued she was a victim of fate. Passionate engagement with complexity of characterisation was the characteristic of good responses.

Question 6: *The Merchant of Venice*

This passage stimulated some interesting debate about presentation of love between Portia and Bassanio. Most were able to contextualise the casket test in relationship to a patriarchal society and the limitations on Portia's right to choose, as well as the object of Bassanio's bounty-hunting. Some noticed that while she says 'let fortune go to hell for it', he eagerly embraces the challenge: 'let me to my fortune and the caskets'. The best of these were very aware of the different resonances of the word 'fortune' at the time, and linked the scene effectively to the dialogue between Bassanio and Antonio in the first scene about 'a lady richly left' and the fact that all Antonio's 'fortunes are at sea'. A few noticed that the audience is well aware of how poor Antonio's fortunes actually look at this moment in the play, adding extra irony for them. Many considered not just Bassanio's mercantile motivations, but also how much his affection for Antonio, as well as his indebtedness may interfere with his love for Portia. Thus they were able to make interesting links to the Trial scene and to the Ring test. Most candidates were sensitive to differences between the Renaissance understanding of sexuality and today's, but were right to consider Antonio as a potential rival for Bassanio's love, as long as they were also conscious of the fairy-tale elements of plot and expression in this part of the play. A few wrote interestingly about the language of the extract and its employment of judicial metaphors of torture and treason which certainly make a jarring impression in this love scene, however jokingly employed. Such responses fully met the AO2 requirement. Some noticed that Bassanio does not 'confess' as much as he swears, and that he receives some help from Portia, whether in her rhymes or in the accompanying song, to 'find me out'. One or two noted that he will be found out later in the play and made a contrast between his cocksure confidence here and later embarrassment. These were subtle responses to a play which still has plenty of power to stimulate debate.

Question 7: *The Merchant of Venice*

Shylock is a still more debatable character, helped by his own contentious and litigious character as well as by the dangerous stereotypes which Shakespeare's characterisation sometimes appears to validate and sometimes challenges. Candidates' writing in response to this question showed real sensitivity and intelligence in addressing the culture of Shakespeare's society and the presentation of a proud Jew as antagonist in what appears at first to be a romantic comedy. There was appreciation that Shylock's own daughter is a victim of his pride. Most responses were able to stay firmly focused on his relationship with Jessica without straying too far from the question to look at Shylock more generally. However, many wrote feelingly about Shylock's experience of oppression and how this made his over-protective treatment of Jessica understandable. More tended, being teenagers, to take Jessica's side and blame Shylock for extending his own sense of oppression to his family. There was much focus on Salerio and Solanio's account of 'my daughter, my ducats' and many cited Shylock's exclamation 'would my daughter were dead at my feet, and the jewels in her ear'. There were different opinions about the theft of Leah's ring as well as the jewels, some seeing this as the ultimate betrayal by Jessica. Others pointed out that we cannot take the account of two noted anti-Semites literally, and that news 'heard on the Rialto' is proved to be highly unreliable. Jessica is not in Genoa but in Belmont. Shylock's own words may be a form of compensatory bragging to Tubal, a wealthier Jew. It is this awareness of the dynamic nature of truth in this drama which marks out a really

good answer, sensitive to how Shakespeare's audience's prejudices are played on in this complex play.

Question 8: *Macbeth*

Macbeth proved to be the most popular Shakespeare text, which was not a surprise. However, this question was not a straightforward 'Macbeth question' and was aimed to test understanding of the context of the drama, and its political resonance. Many recognised that the brutal murder of the family members of a supposed 'traitor' - while not unknown in Tudor society - placed Macbeth's Scotland beyond the pale of the rule of law and justice even in the Renaissance. Some called Macbeth's character Machiavellian, but Machiavelli would surely have counselled against such a naked disrespect of civil and legal codes and warned of the likely consequences of a descent into anarchic tyranny. Strong answers were aware of why Macbeth wants to express his anger at Macduff's treachery, but also that his actions will only increase questioning of the legitimacy of his kingship. A few made links to Macduff's later alliance with Malcolm, and the final description of Macbeth as a 'dead butcher'. Some made the interesting argument that Macbeth's Scotland was a brutal place even before he became king, as he 'unseams' Duncan's enemies and the original Thane of Cawdor is mercilessly executed. They also noted the brutal treatment of Macbeth himself, and that his severed head is carried in triumph at the end of the play. The influence of Polanski's film was perhaps evident here and in answers referring to Macbeth burning Macduff's castle. In contrast, some saw the Messenger's speech as an indication of hope, and that plenty in Scotland oppose Macbeth's tyranny. Many addressed the religious language of 'Heaven preserve you' and Lady Macduff's reference to 'this earthly world; where to do harm/Is often laudable'. There were some very successful links between this language and other antitheses such as 'fair is foul and foul is fair'. This was a good example of how to address both AO2 and wider textual reference through close reading of the extract. A few also appreciated the suddenness and brutality of the stage murder of Lady Macduff's son, noting that the killing of children was rarely shown on the Jacobean stage. A few unfortunately confused Lady Macduff and Lady Macbeth, and some were unable to resist an essentially narrative account of the play, but most studiously mapped the increasing brutality of Macbeth after becoming King, and were particularly affected by his betrayal of Banquo.

Question 9: *Macbeth*

Lady Macbeth, like Shylock, continues to excite plenty of debate. Candidates clearly enjoyed engaging with this, some passionately arguing she was utterly inhuman, or even the Fourth Witch or the incarnation of Hecate (which would be more likely if the whole play were by Middleton, rather than most of it by Shakespeare). These were outnumbered by those who pitied her, and mapped her decline from the ferocious scold of Macbeth's cowardice in earlier scenes to a pathetically haunted figure in the sleepwalking scene, which received plenty of close attention. Stronger responses tended to pick up the question's suggestion that she is pretending to be inhuman, rather than being truly a witch. Her invocation of the 'spirits which tend on mortal thoughts' was especially pivotal to these arguments. Some felt that this was an act she puts on in order to persuade Macbeth, and that she is actually motivated by her own desire for worldly power, or that this is displacement as a result of a childless marriage. These psychologically acute readings were often influenced by particular performances, but frequently showed awareness of different responses to powerful women in the Renaissance period. Candidates were quick to pick up evidence of her pretence elsewhere in the aftermath to Duncan's death, or in her refusal to kill him herself, and the reasons she gives. Some linked this to other imagery contrasting appearance and reality. Others equally validly argued that her command to Macbeth that he should 'look like th' innocent flower/ But be the serpent under't' would have been proof to a religiously educated audience that she was every bit as Satanic as she appears. Many contrasted the language of 'what will these hands ne'er be clean' with 'a little water cleanses us of this deed' to shows how patterns of expression in this play make it easy to address both AO1 and AO2 at the same time.

Question 10: *Much Ado About Nothing*

This was the least popular of the texts, but candidates approached it with enthusiasm and understanding. They were able to see how Beatrice is an unusual character by contrasting her with the submissive but unfortunate Hero, whose honour she wants Benedick to defend in this scene. Thus it was easy to link this scene to others in the play. Some compared it with the contrasting presentation of Beatrice and Hero in the opening scene, some looked at how she defies convention by not responding to Don Pedro's wooing earlier in the play. A number chose to write about Beatrice's soliloquy to show that her character is on a journey, and that she is aware of the dangers of being too strong-minded. Good responses noted that far from hating men, Beatrice is determined in the extract to make Benedick behave like a man and use his hand and sword 'some other way than by swearing by it'. Many pointed out that in the society of the time she can only defend another woman's honour by getting a man to fight for her, hence her cry of 'God, that I were a man!' All answers showed excellent knowledge of the play, so the discriminator for markers was AO2, and the degree to which issues could be addressed through close analysis of language.

Question 11: *Much Ado About Nothing*

This discursive question was the least popular question in the paper, perhaps because it was the one question which did not explicitly reference characters or relationships. However, the few who attempted it often did well, and showed that a question more focused on dramatic form and the conventions of Shakespeare's world could be successful. As elsewhere, a close focus on individual moments and the audience's response to them, illustrated by quotation, was more successful than a more wide-ranging account with the danger of descending into an account of the plot. Most chose to focus on a contrast between the gulling of Beatrice and Benedick and the shaming of Hero, although some looked at Don John's earlier attempt at a practical joke, or at goings on at the masked ball. Some pointed out that another trick or prank, on Claudio, is necessary to undo the damage of the dishonour to Hero, and that the play ends with the happy consequences of practical jokes. There was some clever exploration of the relationship between joking language about appearances and the confrontation with reality, whether painful or happy.

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