

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LITERATURE

H472

For first teaching in 2015

H472/01 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 1 series overview

H472/01 (Drama and Poetry pre-1900) is one of the three components which make up OCR's A Level in English Literature. The examination requires candidates to write about a Shakespeare play of their choice (from a set list of six texts) firstly commenting on a 'context' passage and secondly responding to an essay question. In the second half of the examination, candidates choose one of six questions and write an essay comparing two texts (one drama and one poetry) from a selection of ten works in total, written before 1900. This is a closed text examination.

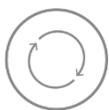
Candidates are likely to perform well on the paper if they keep in mind the dominant Assessment Objective for each part: AO2 [linguistic analysis] in Section 1 (a); AO5 [different interpretations] in Section 2 (b); AO3 [the significance and influence of contexts] in Section 2. They will also succeed if they bear in mind the importance of coherent, accurate expression (AO1 – which applies in all three parts of the paper).

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made a sensible choice of questions in Section 2, answered the specific requirements of those questions, and did not infringe the rubric of the paper • remembered to respond to the relevant assessment objectives for each question type • wrote accurately and legibly, and wrote an appropriate amount for each question (indicating on their script which questions they were answering) • remembered the conventions of writing about literary texts in an examination context • were creative, original, and imaginative – but within the context of the format and requirements of the paper • considered linguistic features and dramatic devices as inherent elements of texts - and treated critical views, performance examples, and contextual information as 'organic' elements of the response • followed their instincts and presented an informed personal response, even when the question set was not the 'obvious' one they were expecting • displayed sound knowledge of terms such as 'poetry', 'verse', 'prose', 'blank verse', 'iambic pentameter' when discussing the Shakespeare passage (but did not rely on punctuation in the passage – particularly exclamation marks – when presenting their analysis). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • answered on an unexpected combination of texts, although there was a significant decline in rubric infringements during this series • 'twisted' responses away from the question to address a preferred topic when an 'expected' question was not set • focused their response on the incorrect Assessment Objectives for that part of the paper • wrote very short or very long responses, or wrote inaccurately or illegibly, or answered in note form • wrote generally rather than responding to a specific question, and sometimes did not indicate the numbers of the questions chosen on the script (with the latter being a significant issue during the current series) • used complex literary terms for their own sake, or 'listed' examples of performances or critical views without blending these into the argument or used contextual information as 'bolted-on' material which was not integrated into responses.

Once again examiners reported that it was a real pleasure to mark so many impressive, thoughtful, and creative responses. Since the recovery from the pandemic (and online learning), it was generally felt that candidates – and their teachers – had worked hard to regain the essential skills required to succeed in a formal examination context. Once again, developments in the personal, imaginative, and original qualities of candidates' responses has increased significantly. For a cohort which (for the most part) had not experienced the process of sitting formal examinations at GCSE, there was nevertheless a sense that the key skills required for success in an examination, such as responding effectively to the question, managing time appropriately, and writing clearly and with accurate expression, were being demonstrated. In short, it was encouraging to conclude not only that the core skills of English Literature were being nurtured and refined, but also that the ability of candidates to focus the experience of their learning in examination conditions was generally notable and positive. There was a significant increase in the number of scripts submitted in typed format this series.

On the whole the paper was well received. Once again examiners were keen to comment on the degree of personal response, creative engagement, and social/political discussion apparent in the responses of many candidates. This was generally welcomed, and particularly, of course, when answers responded to the specific questions set and when candidates took into account the Assessment Objectives being covered. Perhaps understandably, the Covid-19 pandemic was not such a popular topic of reference during the current series, but there was a growing interest in matters of race, gender, mental health, and climate change, and in contemporary events involving war, corruption, and the abuse of political and sexual power. The discussions surrounding #MeToo continue to be of frequent interest, and the word "patriarchy" featured in a large number of essays. The approach to the expression of ideas was notably rather more formal (and appropriately so) in the current series. Candidates are reminded that the assessment of this unit is holistic and that 'formulaic' approaches are not necessarily expected. Indeed, more creative approaches continued to serve many candidates very well, although centres would do well to remember that certain conventions do apply when expressing ideas about literary texts in an examination context.

There was a notable general improvement in the presentation of responses during the current series, although some examiners did comment on difficulties with expression and legibility. Candidates generally used the time available very effectively. There were fewer excessively long responses in this series, and the number of very brief responses was less of a problem. It should be remembered that an assessment of this kind does invite a formally structured set of responses. Occasionally candidates' responses deteriorated into a series of notes and this – inevitably – is likely to affect the final quality of a response. The quality of typed work continues to improve generally. It was often good to infer that candidates had taken the time to check their typed work; this certainly made a difference to them. It would be sensible to remind candidates to indicate which questions they have chosen to answer (by writing the numbers on their script). Once again there were significant problems caused by this issue during the current series.

Assessment for learning – using linguistic, dramatic, and technical terms

Although several aspects of the paper (some questions and Assessment Objectives) require candidates to write about linguistic techniques and/or dramatic effects, it is not always necessary for candidates to use highly complex technical terminology – sometimes drawn from linguistics or from the study of Classical languages – to ‘improve’ their responses. ‘Feature spotting’ alone is rarely helpful, and the use of technical terms for their own sake sometimes adds very little to a candidate’s overall response. Candidates should be encouraged to realise that they do not need to ‘tick off’ a long list of such terms in their responses, that linguistic effects can sometimes be described using more approachable means, and that any discussion of linguistic techniques is most effective when these are linked to the effect they have on the meaning and reception of a text. There was a significant rise in examples of this sort of approach in the 2023 series, perhaps reflecting the progression of trends at Key Stage 4 into A Level study. The terms “dental fricative”, “plosive consonant” and “asyndetic/syndetic listing” featured regularly in scripts during the current series – and not always in a helpful way.

Section 1 overview

Key point call out – Section 1

It is worth reminding centres of OCR's stated policy to select passages for consideration in part (a) from the Alexander text of Shakespeare's works (published by Collins in the UK). This will have implications for the choice of edition used in the classroom.

Many impressive responses were seen to both parts (a) and (b) in Section 1. *Hamlet* was once again the most popular option choice in this part of the paper, but responses on all the set texts were seen. *Measure for Measure* was another popular choice, and there were many responses to *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*. *Coriolanus* and *Richard III* were – once again – less popular. Candidates should be reminded that they are required to answer on the same play for parts (a) and (b). Different approaches are required for parts (a) and (b), with an emphasis on linguistic and dramatic effects in the former, and on critical interpretations and performance examples in the latter. Other Assessment Objectives (3 and 4) are not assessed in this part of the paper, and there did seem to be some confusion about this arrangement among some candidates in this series. Candidates are not expected to cover every aspect of the passage in part (a), and they are not required to adopt a line-by-line analysis approach. Complex technical terminology (sometimes including “epizeuxis” and “polyptoton” in the current series) is not necessarily expected, but if candidates do choose to use terms such as ‘prose’, ‘verse’, ‘poetry’, ‘blank verse’, and ‘iambic pentameter’, then they should be certain of their meaning and relevance. ‘Chiasmus’ and ‘hendiadys’ were especially popular terms in the current series – and often they were used in an enlightening way. Once again, candidates should be reminded that aspects of punctuation, including exclamation marks, are sometimes editorial additions to the texts. Part (a) responses invite consideration of dramatic effects as much as linguistic techniques, and this is a message which many candidates seemed to have absorbed for the current series. For part (b) a more formal, developing structure to the response would be appropriate. Reference to named critics and specific performances is not required, although these could be helpful in a part (b) response.

Question 1 (a)

1 *Coriolanus*

Answer **both** parts (a) and (b).

- (a) Discuss the following passage from Act 3 Scene 3, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects. [15]

This was not an especially popular option choice during the current series. Some candidates chose to comment that this is the turning point of the play. Coriolanus is shown to divide loyalties, and responses showed that he inspires a range of opinions and reactions. Candidates commented that the general atmosphere of confrontation and argument here is characteristic of the play as a whole, and that this is reflected in the fragmented nature of much of the language (short lines; incomplete interjections). It is also notable that the passage presents a large number of questions and exclamations. Coriolanus' listing technique, and the crowded stage, also contribute to the dramatic effect. Coriolanus' final speech stands out in the passage, and candidates sometimes chose to comment on this in detail.

Question 1 (b)

(b) 'The play sometimes suggests that Coriolanus is an enemy of the people.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of the character Coriolanus.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

Some candidates chose to base part of their response to this question on the passage which features in part (a) of the question, although responses towards the top of the mark range tended to range widely across the play as a whole and considered the character of Coriolanus in a number of different contexts. Some candidates chose to provide generalised character descriptions of the play's main figure, although this approach was less likely to be successful in addressing the specific terms of the question. Many candidates chose to make the most of the word 'sometimes' in the question's prompt quotation. Clearly there is a balance to be struck, and much of the dramatic impact of the play arises from the collision in Coriolanus' character between values of loyalty and bravery on the one hand, and vanity and disdain on the other. Candidates sometimes chose to include consideration of recent widely available digital performances of *Coriolanus* by Tom Hiddleston (streamed) and Ralph Fiennes (filmed), both using close-up to stress the complexity of the character.

Question 2 (a)

2 *Hamlet*

Answer **both** parts (a) and (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 2 Scene 2, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects. [15]

This text was by far the most popular option choice on the paper. Candidates often noted that this is one of Hamlet's soliloquies; many seemed pleased to be offered the opportunity to write about such a speech. Hamlet is sharing with the audience his concerns that, although a significant amount of time has elapsed since the Ghost's message, he has as yet done nothing to take revenge on Claudius. Hamlet's low sense of self-worth was commented on by many candidates. Answers often considered the fact that - as often with Hamlet - the rhetoric is slick, but its very expansiveness (the questioning, the listing, and the development of the stage/life metaphor) may suggest that Hamlet is less confident than the soliloquy would have the audience believe. Although Hamlet is the only character to appear in this excerpt from the play, that does not mean that dramatic elements are missing: candidates noted the effect of the stages of Hamlet's rhetoric, his careful building of ideas of self-justification and self-reproach, and his parodies of melodramatic dialogue and action, apparently owing something to the performance of the first player in the Pyrrhus scene immediately preceding the speech. This speech builds to a committed climax and candidates enjoyed witnessing Hamlet playing his part.

Question 2 (b)

(b) 'Ideas and images drawn from the theatre are central to the play *Hamlet*.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of the play *Hamlet*.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

A number of comments were received suggesting that this was, in some ways, a challenging question, although clearly it requires candidates to comment on an important aspect of the play which has an established critical history. There is also a clear link with the passage in the part (a) *Hamlet* question. Examiners saw an impressive range of successful responses to the question, and they were prepared to credit any features of a response which explored plays, playing, performance, acting, theatre and metatheatre on a variety of different levels in the text. The question discriminated well and encouraged candidates to think creatively and effectively about a range of issues in the play. No candidate was penalised for any apparent 'misinterpretation' of the question and its intentions. Clearly Hamlet himself plays a number of different roles throughout the play, and candidates argued that the warning to the soldiers about his 'antic disposition' complicates whether Hamlet's apparent madness is acting or not. He sometimes prefers to meditate on possible 'roles', or the possible impact of them, rather than get on to effects and consequences. An act and a half of the play focuses on a play-within-a-play, which is staged in two versions to 'trap' the 'conscience of the King'. Meanwhile Hamlet shows that he is close friends with the players, invites one of them to speak lines (on 'Pyrrhus') that have a close bearing on recent events at Elsinore, then (briefly) stopping the play in Act Three so the Prince can instruct the players (rather like a modern director) on how to avoid the excesses of coarse acting. Some candidates considered the importance of role-playing at Court: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern being summoned to Elsinore to play the role of Hamlet's bosom friends while reporting back to the King; Claudius speaking of the 'harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art'. Hamlet finds plenty of opportunities to upstage the professional deceptions of courtiers: undressing Osric's pretentious costume and language; forcing Polonius to say the same cloud is like a weasel and a whale; and framing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the most effusive courtly language, which sends them to very real deaths. Hamlet even challenges Laertes to a bout of impromptu stage rhetoric in the graveyard scene, and the final duelling sequence has all the qualities of a meticulously staged performance.

Exemplar 1

'Hamlet' is also laid out like a typical revenge tragedy, so in this way ideas and images drawn from the theatre are central to it. As we enter the final Act of the play, it becomes clear that many characters will not survive: minor characters like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are killed off, Polonius is dead, and the main characters seem set on course to die at each others' hands. Hamlet says to Claudius in the final Act: 'O thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane, drink off this potion. Is thy union here? Follow my mother' and then kills him before succumbing to death himself, and here we see a classic tragic ending where the two most integral characters of the play die. Of this, some critics have said it is an anti-dramatic ending, but whilst we may be disappointed to see Hamlet's death, it is important for the play to instill such emotions in us as it serves its role as a revenge tragedy; it allows for catharsis the cathartic release of these emotions. Thus critics. In the 2021 Globe production of the play, Hamlet and Claudius die side by side, reflecting the tragic nature of the deaths in Hamlet, and evoking emotion as the two accept their fate. This fits perfectly with the Ancient Greek idea of tragedy, and thus we see how 'Hamlet' relies heavily on ideas and images from the theatre.

Finally, Shakespeare uses the idea of antagonists and protagonists, but flouts expectations, especially in the callous characterisation of Hamlet. As the protagonist, Hamlet is expected to be morally praise-worthy, but as the play goes on, he becomes more morally reprehensible. For example, his killing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, or his rejection of Ophelia in 'Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?' both show Hamlet to be a cruel, sometimes violent young man. Wilson Knight says of Hamlet, he is an 'element of evil in the state of Denmark,' and we can see how that may be true, as he sows the seeds of discontent, and ultimately acts as a root for other characters' suffering. Therefore, the idea of a morally good protagonist is lost, as Hamlet is characterised as far from this. Equally, Johnson says 'Hamlet has morality without action... the King has action without morality,' showing how the two protagonist and antagonist can be praised and criticised in equal parts, ultimately taking away from our ideas of protagonists and antagonists in theatre. However, we at heart, we must remember that Shakespeare still characterises Hamlet in a sympathetic way, and we find ourselves rooting for him for the majority of the play,

so the ^{image} ~~idea~~ we traditionally have from the theatre of what a protagonist is, is not entirely lost.

Part of a very good response to Question 2(b) on *Hamlet*.

Question 3 (a)

3 *Measure for Measure*

Answer **both** parts (a) and (b).

- (a) Discuss the following passage from Act 2 Scene 4, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects. [15]

This text was a very popular option. The way in which the play continues to speak to a contemporary generation about power, abuse, and sexuality (and the intersection of all three) seems to make the play interesting and relevant to young people in the first decades of the twenty-first century. The passage in the question comes from the play's second major 'confrontation' scene between Angelo and Isabella. Isabella is playing straight, patiently asking for mercy from the deputy, and when she does not quickly get it, offers to leave. Angelo is more and more ruled by his 'blood' – and he has already deplored the tendency of blood to overcome reason at the start of the scene. There is a good deal of sparring between the characters: Isabella is unsure where this is heading; Angelo finds it hard to come to the point, but regularly introduces faintly sexualised imagery (which many candidates were keen to comment on). Some responses suggested that different performances may bring out how much of Angelo's 'flow' is followed by Isabella. Her words could suggest to Angelo an exaggerated innocence, or some kind of craft. Angelo is trying to raise the idea that good may come of evil, that the end may justify the means, but Isabella is not prepared (in this extract) to enter into debate, remaining piously inscrutable. Some candidates felt that it is Angelo's dark obsession with Isabella's body that drives him on when he seems to make so little progress; others thought he increasingly relishes acting out of his character, trampling his habitual 'gravity'. In the second half of the passage the characters increasingly complete one another's blank verse lines, suggesting a subliminal link may be developing between them.

Question 3 (b)

(b) 'The effects of sexual behaviour are significant throughout the play.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of *Measure for Measure*.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

The link with the passage in part (a) of this question was clear to many candidates, and some chose to use that text as a springboard for their response. Clearly there is a great deal to discuss in relation to Angelo when considering this question, especially the rather complacent way in which he lets his sexual appetites dominate his previous reputation for self-discipline and reason. Sexual behaviour is also a feature of many other aspects of the play, and some candidates were quick to point out that this could be described as an 'overall theme'. The Angelo/Isabella relationship is one of several plot strands treating this topic. Much of the impetus for the plot, for instance, originates in the sexual relationship between Claudio and Juliet. The Mariana plotline is focused on Angelo's failure to honour his nuptial contract. Pompey presides over a comic subplot in which he graduates (apparently) from pimp to hangman's assistant. Lucio shamelessly styles himself something of a sexual epicure, and there are lively glimpses into sexual trafficking in the underworld of Vienna. Film and stage performances of *Measure for Measure* often emphasise issues of sexual morality, often drawing parallels with contemporary London. Vivid visual interpretations of this aspect (*Cheek by Jowl*; *Complicité*) make the sex industry unignorable in some productions, and candidates were quick and keen to discuss them in many responses.

Question 4 (a)

4 *Richard III*

Answer **both** parts (a) and (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 1 Scene 1, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects. [15]

This play was not a popular option at all in the current series, but some very good responses on *Richard III* were seen. Richard's soliloquy follows immediately after the Yorkist celebrations after the decisive Lancastrian defeat at Tewkesbury, so the 'sun of York', Richard's House, is in the ascendant once again. The opening monologue establishes the character of Richard in a way which emphasises both his intelligence and his cunning. Here Richard re-establishes his character as first the stage figure of the 'Malcontent', and shortly afterwards as a 'determined' villain. For a motive he urges his deformity, which the sunshine of York shows up by exaggerating his ugly shadow. Richard ironically claims the high moral ground, as he often does. The introduction of Clarence (and others) provides both a visual, dramatic contrast to the 'solus' introduction, and proof of Richard's ability to subtly manipulate those around him, as he jokes with his brother. There are hints of things to come in the play: in the stage direction 'guarded' and in the reference to the Tower. Candidates sometimes chose to refer in their response to other moments in the play where we see Richard alone (or isolated) on stage, such as Act V, scene iv.

Question 4 (b)

(b) 'Richard's great talent is to make villainy attractive.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of the character Richard.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

From the few candidates who chose this play for this section of the paper, there was an overwhelmingly positive response to the prompt quotation provided. Better responses moved beyond mere (possibly prepared) character sketches of Richard and considered instead the relationship between the attractive and villainous elements in the lead character's personality, arguing that it is the synthesis of these two elements which makes Richard such a successful usurper (if less effective as a King), but a character who is never less than compelling. Right until the night before Bosworth, Richard is able to make his behaviour comprehensible in a world of Machiavellianism and realpolitik (both terms sometimes used by candidates) and often attractive too, moving effortlessly among the stiff rhetoric of his adversaries. Candidates sometimes chose to cite contextual evidence about the historical Richard, and his apparently misunderstood nature, although this was only relevant if it was focused on a literary interpretation of the character and the question. More successful candidates drew on a wide range of performance examples, from Laurence Olivier onwards.

Question 5 (a)

5 *The Tempest*

Answer **both** parts (a) and (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 4 Scene 1, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects. [15]

This play was a popular choice in the current series although there were fewer responses to it than in some recent series. The chosen passage seemed to elicit interested and engaged responses from candidates. There was a great deal for candidates to consider and comment on in the passage. We witness both the earthly and supernatural elements of the play in this scene, and we move from grand theatricality and illusion (in the masque) to intimate relationships (between father and the young couple) and private thoughts (in Prospero's final musings). Candidates sometimes chose to comment on the way this is a microcosm of the broader play. There was plenty of opportunity for the best responses to discuss the variation of metre in this scene (if they wished to) and this comfortably satisfied the AO2 aspects of the question. Some candidates chose to comment on the stage directions, and Prospero's speech about the actors also invited considerable discussion. It makes explicit the play's continual link between art and life, the on- and off-stage world. It was also often claimed by some candidates to be in some indirect way Shakespeare's farewell to his career as a playwright, Prospero then returning to the urgent matter of Caliban's conspiracy.

Question 5 (b)

(b) 'A play about theatrical illusion and the power of performance.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of *The Tempest*.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

A small number of comments had been received about the wording of this question, but examiners found that candidates approached the topic and the question with rigour and interest. In particular, the focus on theatricality and performance in the question offered a clear link to Assessment Objective 5 (which is rewarded for up to 50% of the total marks available in this part of the paper). Clearly this is a play which celebrates drama and performance. The main action is little more than theatrical illusion on a grand scale, meant to try the moral stamina of the 'enemies' brought within Prospero's reach. The magic of the play is often theatrical: the Masque episode, building on the contemporary success of the Court Masque; Ariel singing a wonderful dirge for someone not actually dead; his impersonations and deceptions in the two conspiracy scenes; his descending like a harpy in a scene designed to dole out justice by the power of theatrical illusion (the stage crowded with strange 'shapes', the broken feast). Caliban is attentive to all this 'performance': it moves him to his richest poetry. Throughout the play Prospero becomes intermittently aware of his equivocal role as dramatist - shaping materials from everyday life and 'real' people. At the end he resumes the role of a humble actor, asking for applause. Like many Shakespeare dramas this one features a play-within-a play, with all the accompanying opportunity for metatheatrical conceit. Essays often referred to the play's rich performance history, often using elaborate devices to manage the illusions, such as the 2016 'hi-tech' version at the RSC, and there were even references made to the use of the play in the major ceremonies at the 2012 London Olympics.

Exemplar 2

Shakespeare exemplifies the liberal power of performance through the characterisation of Ariel and his subsequent servitude to Prospero. Dindley suggests "Ariel is the true source of power on the island" as evidenced by his capability 'to swim, to fly, to ride on the world's clouds'. Here Ariel embodies a byzantine spirit who is aware of his magical ability. Yet such power is restricted to serving Prospero. In spite of Dindley's claim, Prospero establishes himself as the true

master of illusions through his forced dominion of Ariel as 'If
 thou more murmur'st, I'll rattle an oak and fix thee in its
 deadly entrails'. From a post-colonial perspective, Prospero's
 mastery of performance denies from Ariel's forced subordination.
 This is supported by Gregory Doran's 2016 production which
 exaggerates the projection of an oak tree threatening to consume
 Ariel. As a result, Ariel's resigned performance is evidenced by
 his agreement to 'do your bidding'. Here Shakespeare
 suggests that the power of one's performance is exchangeable in
 regards to colonial dominion.

Part of an excellent response to Question 5(b) on *The Tempest*.

Question 6 (a)

6 *Twelfth Night*

Answer **both** parts (a) and (b).

- (a) Discuss the following passage from Act 2 Scene 4, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects. [15]

This was one of the popular text choices on the paper in the current series. Once again candidates seemed to relish the opportunity to discuss the play's language, dramatic effects, and thematic issues. The exchange between the Duke and Viola is multi-layered and full of dramatic irony. It plays into issues of gender, sexuality, desire, and disguise, all of which candidates were keen to engage with. Candidates often recognised that the start of the extract mirrors Orsino's lovelorn speech in the first scene. Some candidates suggested that there is a somewhat fractured quality to the central dialogue of the passage, reflecting the power imbalance between the two characters represented. Others recognised that much of the dialogue takes the form of questions and answers, and this sense of catechism arguably highlights the broader questions which the play seems to be posing about love and relationships. The song (and we were sometimes reminded that this is a very musical play) serves to introduce a darker tone to the scene, with its focus on time and death. Candidates often chose to relate this scene to other moments in the play where romantic dialogue is central (such as the scenes between Viola and Olivia); they sometimes pointed out that this is not just the great, but the only, love-scene between Viola and Orsino, taking place through a somewhat porous disguise.

Question 6 (b)

(b) 'The lovers in *Twelfth Night* must learn the importance of constancy in love.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of *Twelfth Night*.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

Examiners saw enthusiasm and accuracy in candidates' responses to this question. The very occasional confusion of "constancy" (which is a word that appears in the play) and "consistency" did nothing to diminish the effect of candidates' engaged and thoughtful responses. Candidates sometimes chose to return to the relationship between Viola and the Duke presented in the passage for question (a). Here the Duke (as always) alleges the virtues of male constancy while (at some level) flirting with the woman who is his page-boy. Orsino tries to be constant to his fixation with Olivia; Olivia to her gloomy memories of her dead brother; Antonio to his beloved shipmate. The play's great love duet harps on constancy (Orsino's big booming durable love, Viola's sister, loving and unloved to death). Most of the characters discover a suitable partner pragmatically, in the course of the play. The comic ending shows the two key couples settling for what the plot has dealt them. Some candidates working at the top of the mark range attempted to consider how the dramatic structure of the play (and, more broadly, of comedy in general) encourages development, change and revelation. Some even pointed out that the 'silvery undertone of sadness' often noted in this play suggests that love may prove one of the few true things among the regular rainfall of daily life.

Exemplar 3

On the other hand, it could be argued that Sir Toby and Maria's relationship shows consistency right through to the end when they get secretly married. Throughout the play, the audience became aware of their relationship through their consistent compliments to each other. It becomes known in Act 1 when Sir Toby says 'She is a beagle, true bred, and one that adores me'. In Emma Rice's 2019 production

ion, the two share many sensual moments together, like dancing and shared songs together. This shows the genuine connection between the two characters right until the very end of the play. Maria is rewarded for her constant love for Sir Toby as she is able to increase her social status without being punished like Malvolio. Tonkin argues that they 'reject the stale conventions of stylized love' meaning they are set aside from the other relationships in the play.

In conclusion, most lovers in *Twelfth Night* must learn the importance of constancy in love as they all seem to marry to find a resolution, but many characters in the play still lack this. Antonio, Malvolio and Sir Andrew Shakespeare details the inconsistency of love in *Twelfth Night* as it can be linked to a complete reversal of social rules during the festival of misrule.

Part of a good and adequately clear response to Question 6(b) on *Twelfth Night*.

Section 2 overview

Many very good responses were again seen to this section of the paper. All texts (and questions) were covered, although the distribution of responses across texts was rather narrower than in some recent series. Ibsen and Rossetti continue to be very popular authors in this context. The popularity of Goldsmith seemed to grow in this series. Sadly the recent rise in popularity of Tennyson on the unit was not matched in the very few responses seen using *Maud* this time. Questions 7 and 12 were notably popular. There were fewer exceptionally long individual responses in this series, but it is still worth reminding candidates that a focused and succinct (yet discursive) approach to this section of the paper is likely to be a successful one. Candidates often presented evidence of planning for this answer; some responses were incomplete and trailed off into lists or notes. Four different Assessment Objectives are covered in this section of the paper (although not AO2), but it is worth remembering that AO3 (context) carries a notional 50% of the marks. As a reminder: this does not mean that half of any response needs to be solely contextual material. Context should be used to inform and support a literary response, rather than being included in 'bolted-on' chunks for its own sake. There has been a marked improvement in the use of context by candidates across the life of the current specification.

Question 7

You should use **one drama text** from the list and **one poetry text** from the list in your answer:

Drama	Poetry
Christopher Marlowe: <i>Edward II</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer: <i>The Merchant's Prologue and Tale</i>
John Webster: <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	John Milton: <i>Paradise Lost Books 9 & 10</i>
Oliver Goldsmith: <i>She Stoops to Conquer</i>	Samuel Taylor Coleridge: <i>Selected Poems</i>
Henrik Ibsen: <i>A Doll's House</i>	Alfred, Lord Tennyson: <i>Maud</i>
Oscar Wilde: <i>An Ideal Husband</i>	Christina Rossetti: <i>Selected Poems</i>

7 'Literature suggests that strong desire is always difficult to control.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers present behaviour motivated by desire. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

This was one of the most popular Section 2 questions. Responses were seen which engaged with a significant number of textual combinations from across the set lists, but by far the most popular combination was *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*. The majority of candidates broadly chose to agree with the statement in the prompt quotation, and a variety of excellent textual examples were provided to support claims made. Supporting contextual material was often used to great effect – especially when it was woven into the response rather than being presented superficially or without supporting the argument. The fact that desire features as an element in so many of the texts available – and that so many different kinds of desire are presented in them – ensured the popularity and success of the question (and of so many of the responses).

Question 8

8 'The modern interest in inclusivity is rarely satisfied in literature from earlier periods.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers respond to diversity and equality. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

This was quite a popular question choice and the topic seemed to appeal considerably to those candidates who chose to adopt this question. Many very impressive responses were seen, although some did suffer as a result of being rather imprecise. Some candidates did choose to distinguish between the key terms, 'inclusivity', 'diversity' and 'equality'. This was not a necessary requirement, but some candidates' responses did suffer as a result of a comparative lack of precision in this respect. Many candidates used context in an effective way to address modern concerns about these issues as they related to the texts, characters, and themes under consideration. The overwhelming response to the prompt quotation from most candidates displayed agreement with the view suggested. Matters of gender, race and sexuality were frequently presented, most often in connection with the Marlowe, Ibsen, Wilde, and Chaucer texts on offer. Some unhelpful generalisations about "the Victorian era" did tend to infiltrate a number of responses seen.

Question 9

9 'A cautious attitude to life is often a wise one.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore cautious attitudes and behaviour. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

This was a fairly popular option. Fewer responses were seen than perhaps had been expected, but a number of impressive responses were offered. The question seemed to suit candidates writing about Ibsen, Chaucer, Milton, and Rossetti particularly well. In the context of the literary texts under consideration, candidates tended to agree with the statement in the prompt quotation although – interestingly – in the contextual material being offered by candidates it was often hinted that a cautious attitude to life can be limiting and unhelpful. Interesting ideas were offered in connection with characters and ideas in the set texts, where either too much or too little caution was being exerted, ranging from Edward's failure to take account of advice to show more caution, to the determination of May or Eve for example, to throw caution to the wind.

Question 10

10 'It is important to be true to yourself before you are true to other people.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the need to reconcile one's own beliefs with the needs of society. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

This was not a very popular option choice, but some very good responses to the question were seen. Some more successful responses considered truth both to oneself and to others; other responses tended to concentrate less successfully on one or other of these elements. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was a very popular text choice in the context of this question, and a whole variety of poetry texts were applied to the idea. Some candidates were very good at using contextual material effectively to show how the idea of 'truth', to oneself or to others, has changed over time and in different social situations. The distinction between truth and selfishness was considered by a substantial number of candidates, as was the idea of being true to God.

Question 11

11 'Literature often explores the gulf between the "haves" and the "have nots".'

In the light of this view, consider how writers explore issues of advantage and disadvantage. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

This was not an especially popular question choice, but candidates offered some interesting responses on this topic. The question offered an excellent opportunity for many candidates to discuss contextual matters, as they related to the topic and to their chosen texts, about financial and class structures. Many candidates chose to apply Marxist theories in their responses. There were interesting responses to this question focusing especially on the Ibsen, Wilde, and Rossetti texts. The paradoxes of King Edward's situation were also profitably considered by some candidates. Responses towards the top of the mark range were able to discuss with fluency semantic issues of ownership, belonging and status implied by the question.

Question 12

12 'Rules were made to be broken.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers present characters dealing with rules and restrictions. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

This was one of the most popular Section 2 questions. Many responses were seen, right across the mark range. Text choices covered all the texts on the set list and almost every combination of texts featured. The question seemed to inspire a rebellious spirit in many candidates, and views were passionately argued about the tyranny of rules and about the inherent need for these to be broken. In nearly every case it was suggested that rules were indeed made to be broken, although more sophisticated responses, generally those working at the higher levels in the mark scheme, were quick to employ contextual evidence to show how attitudes to rules and legal/moral/religious frameworks have changed over time and in different societies. Although examiners saw work in connection with this question on every text in the list, it was notable that responses on Webster, Ibsen, Chaucer, Milton, and Rossetti featured most strongly. Transgression, sin, and punishment proved to be very popular topics with candidates, and it was a pleasure to witness ideas in these connections being discussed with passion and determination.

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