

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LITERATURE

J352

For first teaching in 2015

J352/02 Summer 2023 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 2 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1 (a)	6
Question 1 (b)	8
Question 2 (a)	9
Question 2 (b)	11
Question 3 (a)	12
Question 3 (b)	13
Section B overview	14
Question 4*	15
Question 5*	16
Question 6*	16
Question 7*	17
Question 8*	18
Question 9*	20
Question 10*	20

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.

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

Paper 2 series overview

The Poetry and Shakespeare paper assesses candidates' knowledge and understanding of the anthology poems in their chosen cluster and Shakespeare play. To do well on this paper, candidates need to know their texts and be confident in using textual references to support their ideas. They should be given regular opportunities to practise identifying the focus of each question, planning and writing responses under timed conditions.

In Section A, part a, candidates read unseen texts, swiftly identifying key ideas and techniques with which to make connections with the given anthology poem. In part b of Section A, they require sufficient knowledge of their chosen anthology poem to incorporate AO2 analysis and support their ideas with relevant textual references.

In Section B, Shakespeare, their knowledge of context must be relevant to the question, rather than being bolted on, and they need to refer to at least two moments in the play, one of which will be the extract where that option is chosen.

Examiners continue to report a significant number of scripts which are difficult to decipher, even when the scanned script is magnified. Where candidates are allowed to type their answer, these scripts need careful labelling, appropriate font size, spacing and margins for ease of marking.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showed clear knowledge and understanding of the anthology poems and Shakespeare plays engaged confidently with unseen poems, making relevant comparisons in a structured response made analytical comments on language, form and structure, showing understanding of the genres of poetry and drama wrote detailed personal responses, focusing on the wording of the task and using relevant textual references made commentary on the context of Shakespeare's plays relevant to the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reproduced imperfectly understood interpretations of the anthology poems and Shakespeare plays made limited or no links with the unseen texts, often assuming the poets' ideas were the same explained the meaning of selected references or made generalised comments about techniques either repeated the wording of the task so that it became intrusive or ignored it entirely explained some aspects of context without direct link to the question.

Assessment for learning



Planning is key to success. The best responses showed evidence of careful planning, with candidates establishing their thesis in the opening paragraph, whether this is comparing the texts in Section A, part a, explaining how their chosen poem fits the wider brief in Section A part b or providing a swift overview of their ideas in Section B. Centres may find it useful to spend more time supporting candidates in constructing well organised essays, with linked paragraphs, and identifying short, apt textual references that they will employ.

Section A overview

The questions posed the candidates an appropriate level of challenge, regardless of the cluster chosen. The unseen texts were of an appropriate length and complexity, particularly in the context of the uniformly lengthy studied texts, and every candidate found something to say. In many cases, they engaged more fully with the unseen than the taught text. Rubric infringements in part b were very rare.

Fewer candidates this year chose a poem from a different cluster in part b than they had answered on in part a. Less successful responses came from candidates who tried to compare one or both of the part a texts with their chosen poem. Comparison is not required in part b and candidates must write on a different poem, of their choice, from part a.

In general, part a of this section was answered in more detail and at more length than part b. Part b could be a little brief, and it felt that timings had sometimes been forgotten in the pressure of the exam. Responses to the (a) questions in the poetry section were lengthier and more detail than those to (b). Candidates wrote in greater depth and detail on the poems printed on the examination paper. Two poems offered more potential for comment than one and the opportunity to compare yielded a more analytical approach. In part a, the more successful responses identified a comparative point, and then explored the ways the poets created and conveyed these similar, or different ideas within their poems. Most candidates used comparative discourse markers to structure their responses. This allows for more interwoven comparison than the approach of looking at the poems separately with some comparative points in the introduction and conclusion. Less successful responses made use of connectives such as 'similarly' or 'likewise' where the following point or chosen technique bore no relation to the structural logic suggested by the candidate.

Candidates need to be aware that unseen poems will not necessarily take the same approach and viewpoint to the anthology poem. It was noticeable how many students wanted to go down the route of *Dusting the Phone* and *I Am Not Yours* being very similar in terms of feelings and beliefs and missed the differences, even though they were all able to a degree to comment on differences, for example, in the imagery, form and structure.

Less successful responses made a point, followed by an assertion that this was relevant to the demands of the question, even when this was not the case. Lack of textual support, even in responses that in other respects are commendable (particularly true in (b) responses); one area of improvement from last year seemed to be comment on the writer's use of language where the emphasis was on effect rather than feature spotting.

The broadening out of the question for part b gave candidates a wide choice of their prepared anthology texts. Some did not answer part b, indicating that they lacked the knowledge to answer a question without the poem in front of them. More successful responses showed signs of planning, with the candidate establishing a thesis, the message that the poet is communicating, before exploring the methods in which they do so. AO1 and AO2 are assessed in part b. Where responses lacked textual support or misquoted references, it was difficult to achieve the higher-level band criteria, particularly in AO2 analysis of language, form and structure.

Misconception



In Section A, some candidates used poems from part a to compare with their choice of anthology poem in part b. There is no comparative element to part b and candidates must focus on one text.

In part a, many candidates assume that the unseen text has been chosen because its ideas are the same as the anthology text. Although the overarching concept, e.g. 'someone desperate for love' will be the same, the views expressed may be different.

Question 1 (a)

1 Love and Relationships

Read the two poems below and then answer **both part a) and part b)**.

You should spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

- a) Compare how these poems present someone desperate for love.

You should consider:

- ideas and attitudes in each poem
- tone and atmosphere in each poem
- the effects of the language and structure used.

[20]

Candidates responded well to this question, perhaps because of the conversational tone of the anthology poem. Higher-level responses had plenty to say about Kay's staccato sentence structure and that interplay with the verse lines, and those responses took the opportunity of comparing the metaphors in the third stanza with the similes in the first stanza of the unseen poem, and the two metaphors in the final stanza. The imagery in both poems provided opportunities to demonstrate elements of critical style. Lower performance responses included much literal translation such as the simile 'lost as a candle lit at noon' shows that the speaker feels 'as lost as a candle at noon'. Nearly all candidates understood that Kay's desperation springs from separation with her lover, and nearly all recognised her 'assault' of the postman as an almost obsessive escalation or, at lower levels, her desperation driving her 'crazy'. Only the higher-level responses showed understanding of the phone as a surrogate for her lover, being her only connection to them, and thus why she would 'dress' for it. The development of many 'Dusting the Phone' analyses was hampered by a general sense of 'obsession' or 'madness' instead of looking at the shifts in mood as the poem progresses.

Many interpretations of the unseen poem were informed by Kay, ignoring the line 'You love me' and making assumptions that Teasdale also feels ignored or is separated from her partner. Other readings included Teasdale's lover being dead ('spirit'), or, based on the repetition of 'lost', the poet being highly confused in her desperation and thereby explaining the 'nonsensical' similes. Higher performance responses usually understood that Teasdale already has love, but that it isn't enough for her as she wants to feel the same degree of passion as Kay's speaker. Most candidates commented to some degree on the light imagery. More successful responses explored how a candle at noon would be overpowered to the point of being indistinguishable, thereby representing Teasdale's wish to surrender herself to an all-encompassing love. Some highlighted that Teasdale would be willing to sacrifice valuable senses for the right love.

Exemplar 1

Paragraph 1

1.	a.	Whilst in 'Dusting the Phone', the speaker conveys a message of confused desperation for her lover, in 'I am Not Yours' the speaker longs for this wild desire, currently unable to do so.
----	----	--

Paragraph 2

		<p>Furthermore, the vivid imagery created in 'Dusting The Phone', as she gives the phone "Silver service", adds to the sense of self-ridicule through the hyper hyperbole here, with the imbalance perhaps suggesting how this fixation and desire for love is detrimental to her health, both mental and physical. The prosaic language seen here and elsewhere add to the sense of confusion, as it contrasts with typical poetry, creating an unfinished feel to it, as if it were done in a state of panic. This contrasts with I Am 'I Am Not Yours's more traditional language, as the speaker says "put out My senses, leave me deaf and blind", highlighting her the hyperboles used here, that appeal to the senses, further creating an image of longing in</p>
		<p>the reader's mind. However, the more traditional language suggests a certainty of what the speaker desires, contrasting with 'Dusting The Phone's unfinished, rushed feel.</p>

This response to Question 1 (a) demonstrates skilful comparison. It starts by providing a concise overview of the different ways in which the speakers show their desperation for love. The paragraph selected from later in the response demonstrates sustained, interwoven comparison, considering how different styles of language serve to reflect the speakers' feelings.

Question 1 (b)

b) Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology which presents a difficult relationship.

[20]

The broad scope of the question allowed candidates to answer on a wide range of texts. Contextual biographical material is not assessed in Section A, Poetry, and can use up valuable time. Candidates showed this year that it is possible to swiftly incorporate this knowledge into relevant analysis, for example stating that the poem '...may be a portrayal of how Plath felt after the birth of her children and the struggle to care for them while battling with clinical depression. The tone seems exhausted and exasperated, however also determined to care for the baby and acknowledging that its presence in the world is natural.'

Most interpreted 'A Song' as 'difficult' due to miscommunication and misunderstanding between the speaker and her lover, explaining what the speaker might have meant instead. One interpretation concluded that the lover had died at sea ('vainly flow') and that the 'storm' in her soul is grief.

The majority of responses to 'A Broken Appointment' recognised that Hardy's 'difficulty' comes from an unrequited love. Less successful responses focused on explaining why the speaker was 'stood up', while higher-level responses examined rhythm and syntax in relation to 'time'.

All candidates understood the speaker's initial disconnection and how 'Morning Song' progresses from distance to connection between the mother and baby. They explored imagery such as 'cow-heavy' interpreting it as Plath's sole purpose being a milk-provider for her child.

'Long Distance II' responses often clearly saw the father's grief as the 'difficulty' in this poem, and the initial inability of the speaker to understand his father's actions. Higher-level informed personal responses included commentary such as the 'transport pass' mirroring the journey connecting the living to the afterlife, and that the inference of 'pass' allows the father to reunite with his wife after death.

Most candidates responding to 'In Paris with You' to be the speaker's disinterest in the 'rebound' beyond a fleeting, sexual moment and their self-absorption. Higher performance interpretations included the idea that the 'rebound' would find this a difficult relationship too, as the speaker has no thought for their interests or needs.

With 'Warming Her Pearls', candidates were greatly informed by context, the forbidden nature of a lesbian relationship, and the class divide between the maid and mistress. At lower-level performance, candidates understood the maid's love to be requited and the pearls as a gift, whereas higher-level responses viewed the pearls as literally and metaphorically enslaving the maid ('on my neck, her rope') and trapping her in an impossible situation.

Question 2 (a)

2 Conflict

Read the two poems below and then answer **both part a) and part b)**.

You should spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

- a) Compare how these poems present pity for victims of conflict.

You should consider:

- ideas and attitudes in each poem
- tone and atmosphere in each poem
- the effects of the language and structure used.

[20]

This cluster was again the most popular. Most candidates were able to access the unseen and use their knowledge of the taught poem to construct a comparative discussion. They explored central shared concepts such as a sense of regret and sorrow, with an accompanying sense of guilt or responsibility and the futility of the death and engaged with the ways in which vivid imagery gives an insight into the poets' feelings. Higher-level responses commented on: a sense of guilt or empathy that bordered on something that could be described as 'love'; a sense of contrast between Heaney's grotesque figurative language and Komunyakaa's largely romantic language. '*...he was not just a dead soldier, he was a man with a life, he loved people, he had emotions and life experiences just like the reader.*'

Many responses showed confused knowledge and understanding of the historical context of 'Punishment', lacking awareness of the two levels of victimhood. The literal historic bog body and the Irish women involved with British soldiers during the Troubles were conflated so literally that it led to some very confused attempts to explain the persona's relationship with the body and his feelings: Heaney was simultaneously the man she had an affair with, the murderer, and a modern-day domestic abuser. Some candidates believed that the bog woman was murdered by her sisters or that the IRA was an ancient tribe that had killed the bog woman and her sisters. Higher-level responses truly understood the analogies and produced mature analytical work.

At lower levels, candidates focused on the 'gory' or 'disgusting' descriptions of the bog body in 'Punishment'; some believing that the girl had only recently drowned and was known personally by the speaker ('I almost love you'). More successful candidates commented on the inappropriate sexualisation of the girl, referencing Heaney's acknowledgement of himself as an 'artful voyeur'. The majority of candidates commented on the violence of the punishments, with one top-level response linking the 'blindfold' to the girl's unawareness of the danger to herself by entering into a forbidden relationship. Most referenced 'scapegoat' to some degree, with mid-level responses linking it to the girls' continued dehumanisation (cross referencing 'halter') or recognising blame, and higher levels aware of 'religious connotations'. There was some uncertainty over how to respond to the ambiguous claims of 'love' in both, and a significant number of candidates wanting to condemn the inappropriate and lascivious thoughts of Heaney's narrator. The complexity of Heaney's language gave higher-level responses the opportunity to demonstrate sustained critical skills, making insightful or perceptive comments about the role of the speaker and the ambiguity of the language and tone.

'We Never Know', however, resulted in a variety of interpretations. If supported, these received due credit. Some candidates read the opening metaphor and simile literally. Many did grasp how the dancing image related to the man's dying fall and commented on the distance between that idea and the reality of the death. The context of war, evident with the 'distant mortar', 'choppers taking off' and 'gun barrels' was often ignored, with only higher-level responses understanding that the speaker was complicit in the man's death.

Candidates across all levels believed that the speaker was a female known to the victim who observes his death, informed by 'swaying with a woman'. Another notable interpretation was that the speaker and victim were members of the same unit and friends, hence 'love', compassion, and care with the victim's body and belongings. Lower performance responses believed the victim to be dancing and happy and contrasted this with sudden death. Most connected the 'blue halo' to angels and heaven, explaining that the victim must have been innocent or 'a good person'. The reference to flies was not always seen as part of this image, with some focusing on how this showed the body to be disgusting, as in 'Punishment'. Many responses avoided 'I fell in love' altogether, although a large number of candidates linked this emotion with the viewing of the crumbled photograph and the act of kindness in turning the body over.

Exemplar 2

		The sympathetic atmosphere is also reinforced
		by the the large saying by the quote
		There's no other way to say this: 'I fell in
		love' The caesura creates a pause through the
		use of the colon. The pause created makes
		the reader feel upset for the person as they
		admit their love to the man when dead.

In Exemplar 2, the candidate refers to the poem's structure, identifying an example of a caesura being created by a colon. This is followed by statement that it makes the reader feel upset. The comment focuses on explaining the meaning of the textual reference, not on the effect of the structure. Higher-level responses explored the tension created by the pause before the speaker's admission of love, suggesting that it reflected his guilt in killing the man. Others considered that, like Heaney, there was something unorthodox in his feelings and that the speaker used the colon as a dramatic build up to his admission.

Question 2 (b)

- b) Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology which presents sympathy for those involved in conflict. [20]

Candidates chose from a wide range of relevant poems and demonstrated close personal engagement. Responses to 'Lament' were often insightful and perceptive, exploring the wide range of imagery used to show the destructive impact of war. 'Flag' was also a popular choice with responses understanding the sheer futility of patriotism, one candidate commenting how in reality a national flag was *'like any other piece of cloth, like a dirty handkerchief, or even one's underwear.'* 'Honour Killing' was recognised as a spirited rejection of the expectations on the speaker. In exploring what she rejects, pity was seen for what she endured.

With 'The Man He Killed', at all levels candidates commented on the use of punctuation and hesitation in 'because-because' and the speaker's struggle to justify killing; however, at lower levels this was occasionally unclear and missing elements necessary for a coherent explanation. All candidates understood that the speaker bore no personal ill-will towards his 'foe' and many were able to draw parallels between the two soldiers, thereby evoking pity.

With 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', candidates were usually able to comment on mass slaughter/dehumanisation to some degree from 'cattle', and some recognised the poem as a sonnet but did not comment on what function this serves beyond pointing out that sonnets are usually love poems. Many commented on the 'rifles' rapid rattle' as contributing to the aural imagery of a battlefield, and the lack of funerals for the soldiers, which evoked pity.

Most responses to 'What Were They Like' chose to focus primarily on the second stanza, from which nearly all were able to comment to some degree on the children as 'buds' and paddy fields as 'mirrors'. 'Bitter to the burned mouth' was more problematic, with some interpreting this as anger or 'fiery hatred'. At lower levels, candidates often imagined how the Vietnamese people responded or felt. Any response that referenced the first stanza accused the questioner of 'ignorance', rudeness, or being 'uneducated', incorrectly citing the 'misspelling' of 'Viet Nam' as evidence; however, it might be more useful to view the questioner as a historian or archaeologist, as indicated by their respectful use of the native spelling (Việt Nam), and the nature of their questions ('lanterns of stone', 'epic poem', etc.) which suggest a romanticised idea of a lost ancient civilisation such as the Mayans or Egyptians, thereby emphasising the devastation and obliteration of Vietnamese culture in a recent, 20th Century conflict.

Question 3 (a)

3 Youth and Age

Read the two poems below and then answer **both part a) and part b)**.

You should spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

- a) Compare how these poems present a young person's viewpoint.

You should consider:

- ideas and attitudes in each poem
- tone and atmosphere in each poem
- the effects of the language and structure used.

[20]

Although this was the least popular cluster to be answered on, there were many very successful responses. Most candidates understood how both poems showed a young person's viewpoint is characterised by a sense of adventure and revealed the difference between the child's world and that of the adult that awaits them. Candidates in general felt that despite the grand claims and seemingly alarming adventures described in the unseen, the Silverstein poem gives the reader more assurance than the Komunyakaa, with the carefully sanctioned liberty, watchful care, and loving words standing in direct contrast to the young person's voice in 'Venus's-flytraps'.

The open nature of the question allowed all candidates to perform to their ability, and most attempted some analysis of the language and narrative voices. The deliberate and obvious structure of the unseen poem was very helpful. The comparison between the texts was obvious to the vast majority and helped access to higher levels as 'identifying key links' moved into 'developing key points of comparison' with greater ease. Most candidates recognised the neglect of Komunyakaa's five-year-old, his possession of disturbingly inappropriate knowledge, and a sadistic and vengeful bent ('Their ears hurt.') Most contrasted the joyful experiences of Silverstein's child; however, one candidate argued that 'Dirty Face' also expressed neglect, where 'dirty faced' was seen as an insult or unkindness, exposure to danger in the 'dark cave' and 'horrible dog' suggested inattention, and 'biting' hinted at an underlying aggression.

Question 3 (b)

- b) Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology which presents a young person's view of life. [20]

Candidates recognised that the young person's point of view did not necessarily involve hearing the young person's voice, making many texts relevant. 'Red Roses' was the most popular choice, being on the syllabus for the last time. This poem has a powerful impact on candidates, most discussing how Tommy either doesn't understand the abuse he receives or deliberately avoids acknowledging it, either to himself or the 'nice lady' at the hospital. The majority of candidates provided some analytical AO2 commentary of the very vivid and grim imagery used to describe the treatment of Tommy – 'broken scarecrow...like a diamond had bitten it...he squashes like fruit'. Higher-level responses examined the deeper inferences of aspects of the poem, for example 'Blue Lady' to conclude that the mother suffers depression and also requires help. These responses considered the red roses as Tommy becoming physically violent towards his mother or as Tommy's 'gift' to his mother to make her happy and lift her depression.

Some candidates this year, as part of an understandable personal response, were tempted to push their analysis beyond what the text can support with general and worthy warnings of the cyclical nature of abuse: '*...as now Tommy is abusive to his kid, which means that his kid could be abusive to his future child*'. Other choices included 'Midnight on the Great Western', 'Out, Out', 'Baby Song' and, occasionally 'Cold Knapp Lake', 'Spring and Fall: to a Young Child' and 'When I have fears that I may cease to be'.

Section B overview

Most candidates showed a strong sense of engagement with their chosen play. There were very few instances of candidates unable to comment on a second moment to accompany the extract-based question or to offer two moments for the discursive question. While contextual comments included the usual generalisations about patriarchal societies, most candidates were able to make more judicious choices of contextual references that actually supported the response. Comments about religious practices were better informed than in previous series. Successful responses demonstrated understanding of dramatic conventions, audience response and, in some cases, knowledge of alternative contemporary presentations, for example acknowledging Shakespeare's portrayal of Shylock to be less disturbing than Marlowe's characterisation of Barabas.

Quotation was largely well-handled and, outside the extract, mostly well-recalled. Although there were fewer responses to this question, Question 9 tended to generate the best-quoted responses. There was a sense that some strong candidates had been exploring Macbeth's soliloquies in a practical dramatic context and had an excellent recall of the text. There were fewer instances of the awkward abbreviating of quotes with nonsensical ellipses, as outlined last year. However, there were other issues. In recognising the value of embedding quotations, many candidates lost control of syntax, with overzealous use of square brackets to correct pronouns, verb tenses, etc. in order to embed a quote, rather than adapting their own phrasing around the reference. Trains of thought were often hard to follow as a result. Very few students understood the convention of using forward slashes to indicate new lines – this was also an issue with poetry responses. In the grand scheme of things, this was not of huge concern but, where candidates were attempting to make points about enjambement, it was not always clear what their argument was, especially if lines were slightly misquoted.

Terminology was accurately used in the main with common terms handled effectively. More sophisticated terms were less secure, with frequent misunderstandings of the difference between poly- and asyndetic listing when the referencing of the listing would have actually been sufficient. There were also misunderstandings surrounding the use of tricolons with any three phrases separated by commas offered up as examples of such, even if the context of the full quotation negated this. Several candidates struggled to comment on blank verse accurately, and there were also some questionable ideas about rhyming couplets.

Question 4*

- 4* Explore the ways in which Shakespeare presents hope and despair. Refer to this extract from Act 4 Scene 1 and elsewhere in the play. [40]

This extract question on *Romeo and Juliet* was more popular than the discursive option. Most candidates engaged well with the extract, identifying the despair of Juliet and the hope given by Friar Lawrence. Successful responses used the Friar as a springboard to exploring his involvement elsewhere with secure contextual links examining his role as a representative of the Catholic Church. Many chose the balcony scene as reflecting hope for the young lovers and the scene at the tomb to illustrate despair. Higher-level responses often considered the theme of fate from the Prologue and discussed how this led to a lack of hope for the two 'star-crossed lovers'. Others discussed Romeo's seeming despair over his infatuation for Rosaline, or the hope for the reconciliation of the two Houses at the end of the play.

The requirement for context need not be overlong or complex to receive significant reward, as evidenced by a candidate who commenting on Juliet's relationship with her parents and sense of being trapped. Citing '...past hope, past cure...' remarked: '*The exclamation makes the audience feel some sympathy. An Elizabethan audience would feel sorry for her because society was a patriarchal society, where daughters were owned by their fathers until marriage. This creates a sense of hopelessness*'. Here the context is clearly being used to inform the response to the text, rather than being a separate and distinct comment. Some considered Juliet's recognition that she would be committing a sin to marry Paris with others noting that suicide was also a sin.

Most candidates moved beyond the extract to consider other moments in the play, particularly Act 1 Scene 5, Act 2 Scene 2, Act 3 Scene 1 and Act 5 Scene 3. Successful responses saw the significance of the extract as a pivotal scene and the 'bloody knife' foreshadowing the final act. Candidates generally started their response by exploring the extract, the strongest returned to it as they referred to moments elsewhere in the play, genuinely creating links. They evaluated the end of the play and how each family faced their own despair in losing their children, but also the sense of hope that the feud would now be over.

Question 5*

5* How does Shakespeare present fighting between the Montagues and the Capulets?

Explore at least two moments from the play to support your ideas.

[40]

The focus of the question was on 'fighting' as opposed to the feud or violence, and this may have been off-putting to some candidates. It elicited some rather narrative accounts of moments of fighting, with straightforward explanations of who was fighting and why. Candidates engaged in a meaningful way when they connected fighting to the feud and the concepts of male and/or family pride and honour. Many were successful in commenting on the role that conflict plays in the tragedy. Significant scenes discussed were Act 1 Scene 1 and Act 3 Scene 1.

Less successful responses chose one moment when fighting takes place with the text of the Prologue referencing the 'ancient grudge' being offered up as the second moment. This led to some rather stilted commentaries on the presentation of fighting compared to ones that referenced more dynamic dramatic interactions. Many used the insults between the fighting characters, citing the involvement of servants, to good effect.

Strong responses explored Tybalt's role in perpetuating violence and the impact that this had on Romeo and Juliet's relationship before and after his death. Some perceptive understanding was shown of Romeo's unwillingness to be drawn into fighting after his marriage to Juliet and of Benvolio's attempts to keep the peace. While reference to pride and honour provided the opportunity to explore context, some responses considered how the Prince represented natural order and justice, often using his role as a way into exploring the moments of fighting preceding his appearances.

Question 6*

6* Explore the ways in which Shakespeare presents the fortunes and misfortunes of Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*. Refer to this extract from Act 1 Scene 1 and elsewhere in the play. [40]

Unusually, the extract question was not a popular choice, with the majority of responses on *The Merchant of Venice* opting for the discursive option. The presence and dominance in the extract of more peripheral candidates from the play suggested that candidates were not particularly confident or familiar with this moment in the play. The ambiguity around the term 'fortune' advantaged candidates, as it allowed them legitimately to write a response focusing almost exclusively on Antonio's money problems in the play, with 'misfortune' understood more generally.

Most candidates used the explanation provided in the question that Antonio's sadness was, at least in part, caused by the uncertainty of his ships at sea. Some referred to his relationship with Bassanio and how this led to some of his misfortunes. Very few candidates took the opportunity for AO2 analysis of a passage printed on the exam paper, possibly finding the concepts and imagery challenging. Responses ranged outside the extract very quickly, largely centring on the court scene. Candidates seemed far more comfortable exploring Antonio in relation to Shylock, considering how this led to his misfortune of owing him a pound of flesh. This led to some interesting discussion of how fortune/misfortune of one character is seen in relation to another, with particular focus on the success of Portia in releasing Antonio from his bond.

Question 7*

7* 'Shakespeare's portrayal of Jewish characters is very disturbing.'

To what extent do you agree? Explore at least two moments from the play to support your ideas.

[40]

This discursive question was answered by the majority of candidates who studied *The Merchant of Venice*. They usually understood that the focus was on Shakespeare's presentation, considering the creation of Jewish characters, mainly Shylock, and the way they are seen from the perspectives of others. Some took a simpler approach, arguing that Shylock is a disturbing character because of what he says and does. While some argued that Shakespeare's portrayal reflecting the anti-semitic context, others felt that the portrayal was more balanced and therefore less disturbing, citing moments in the play when the audience is encouraged to feel some sympathy for him. More successful responses differentiated between the way in which Shakespeare's contemporary audience would have received this presentation and 21st century filters. Across the range, candidates were able to support interpretations with relevant examples from different parts of the play. This question did demonstrate candidates' abilities to make meaningful use of contexts in discussion of religious discrimination. Very few candidates considered Jewish characters other than Shylock. Many explored the impact of Shylock's reaction to Jessica leaving him. Some higher-level responses considered Jessica's treatment of and by her father, some seeing it as disturbing in the light of patriarchal attitudes. Very occasionally, Tubal and Lancelot Gobbo (Shylock's servant) were considered.

Shylock's 'I am a Jew' speech was used by many candidates as a plea to be treated with common humanity, therefore inviting sympathy. Higher-level responses either reflected on the way it would have been received at the time – with audiences encouraged to mock him – or explored how it culminates with the warning that he will perpetuate their cruelty, and is therefore disturbing. Some also considered the presentation of Christian characters as disturbing in their treatment of Jews, in particular Portia's sentence at the end of the play and Shylock's isolation.

All candidates referenced the 'pound of flesh' scene and were able to analyse this in relation to religious context of the time period. Some of the more successful responses spoke about Act 2 Scene 2 and Salerio and Solanio in Act 2 Scene 7. In these responses, candidates discussed the stereotypical view of Jewish people and their obsession with money.

Question 8*

- 8* How does Shakespeare present the supernatural in *Macbeth*? Refer to this extract from Act 4 Scene 1 and elsewhere in the play.

[40]

Macbeth continues to be the most popular Shakespeare text, with the extract question being answered by the majority of candidates. Candidates have clearly been well taught on the theme of the supernatural and were able to give many examples throughout the play. Some candidates discussed Lady Macbeth's relation to the supernatural, others concentrated on the effects of the supernatural on Macbeth, including the apparitions of the dagger and Banquo's ghost. Higher performance candidates were able to discuss the role the supernatural had in determining Macbeth's fate, whether it was their interference or the effect of Macbeth's hamartia. Most candidates resisted the temptation to write largely narrative responses that simply retold the occasions where the supernatural played a part in the text, and instead addressed legitimate areas such as: links with the devil, absolute power, influence over the natural world and deception.

There was some assured analysis of language and equivocation, particularly in the given extract. Many candidates linked the extract to Act 1 Scene 1 focusing on 'fair is foul and foul is fair' - some linking this with Macbeth's 'so foul and fair a day I have not seen' to develop the idea of the supernatural corrupting Macbeth through mirroring their language.

Less successful responses revealed considerable mis-sequencing of events in the play. Several responses claimed that the extract and Banquo's presence in the show of eight kings, was the driving factor in Macbeth to then have Banquo killed out of jealousy. There was similar confusion in the ordering of the 'Is this a dagger...?' soliloquy, with many candidates placing it after the murder of Duncan.

Many responses explored the attitude of other characters to the supernatural. The reference to Banquo in the extract was linked to his ability to resist their temptation and recognise their harm. Others considered Lady Macbeth's inability to wash the blood from her hands as being caused by the supernatural rather than her guilty conscience. Many explored her appeal to spirits to remove her feminine qualities and provided effective commentary on context in terms of attitudes to women. Some candidates were side tracked into considering Macbeth's manipulation by his wife as well as the witches, losing direct focus on the question.

In this series, candidates seemed better able to seamlessly interweave discussion of context with this question, much linked to the James I's interest in and involvement with the supernatural, including the publication of *Daemonologie* and court cases linked to witchcraft. Other areas of context included the Divine Right of Kings and The Great Chain of Being. Centres should continue to develop candidates' skills in moving beyond simply stating facts about the context and help them to see how understanding the context in which Shakespeare is writing influences his ideas.

Exemplar 3

		However, the supernatural is also extremely present as Shakespeare heavily shows it as an underlying theme in the rest of the play. Lady Macbeth was commonly seen as one of the most supernatural characters in this play such as before her and Macbeth commit regicide on King Duncan. In her the soliloquy she begs "unsex me now" to the spirits, which typically in the Jacobean audience would've been astonishing as women were only really there to make their husbands look good. However, a
--	--	---

In this response to Question 8, there is some awareness of context regarding Jacobean attitudes to women, with the recognition that this would have been 'astonishing' to the contemporary audience. It is 'bolted on' rather than integrated into the discussion of Lady Macbeth's desire to interact with forces of the supernatural. Higher-level contextual analysis would have considered why the restrictions on women conflict with Lady Macbeth's desire for power. This then allows the candidate to explore more fully her request for the spirits to 'unsex me here', filling her with the 'cruelty' that would help her to commit regicide.

Question 9*

9* To what extent do Macbeth's soliloquies encourage the audience to pity him?

Explore at least two moments from the play to support your ideas.

[40]

There were far fewer responses to this discursive question on *Macbeth*. More successful approaches ranged confidently around the whole play with excellent recall of the text, suggesting that soliloquies had been learned in a performance context. The audience response was interwoven throughout and therefore the extent to which Macbeth was pitied remained central. Some candidates referred to dialogue rather than soliloquies. They could still show knowledge and understanding of character and demonstrate their analytical skills. Less successful responses tended to use this question as an opportunity for basic narrative retelling of moments in the play which did or did not create sympathy.

There were a limited number of candidates who were disadvantaged by either ignoring or not understanding the direction towards soliloquies. The focus of the question on pity still allowed them to engage more generally and be suitably rewarded. Some compared Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's speeches, seeing how they impacted on the audience's reactions. One candidate commented that '*Lady Macbeth encourages pity through the devastation of her madness*' with her soliloquies showing '*her fall from grace to insanity*'.

Context once again was well used, with frequent references to regicide and the Great Chain of Being. James 1 was referenced together with the Divine Right of Kings, often used to support an argument against feeling pity for Macbeth. They often cited his awareness of the evil of killing Duncan in his 'Is this a dagger I see before me' soliloquy. These candidates saw Banquo as a foil to Macbeth and that Banquo possessed the necessary strength of character to become king.

Question 10*

10* How does Shakespeare make the banter between Beatrice and Benedick so amusing? Refer to this extract from Act 5 Scene 4 and elsewhere in the play.

[40]

Much Ado About Nothing is studied by a small number of centres, with the extract question being chosen by virtually all candidates. The verbal sparring and humour created by Beatrice and Benedick was handled effectively by most candidates who analysed the ways in which their banter related to their personalities and expectations of men and women at the time. Contextual comments tended to generalise about the patriarchy, but the more successful responses were also influenced by the theatrical context and conventions of courtly love. Higher performance focused on the genre of comedy, with strong analysis of the 'safety' of Beatrice and Benedick's banter, given the comic tropes and resolution. Their masked jibes in Act 2 Scene 1, and the contrivances of Act 2 Scene 3 and Act 3 Scene 1 were explored most effectively. This, in turn, allowed candidates to draw insightful comparisons between Beatrice and Benedick's interactions and those of Hero and Claudio usually concluding that the relationship of Beatrice and Benedick is likely to be more successful.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Access to Scripts

For the June 2023 series, Exams Officers will be able to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts' for all of our General Qualifications including Entry Level, GCSE and AS/A Level. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular CPD courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

ExamBuilder is the question builder platform for a range of our GCSE, A Level, Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals qualifications. [Find out more](#).

ExamBuilder is **free for all OCR centres** with an Interchange account and gives you unlimited users per centre. We need an [Interchange](#) username to validate the identity of your centre's first user account for ExamBuilder.

If you do not have an Interchange account please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username, or nominate an existing Interchange user in your department.

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals.

[Find out more](#).

Need to get in touch?

If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on
01223 553998

Alternatively, you can email us on
support@ocr.org.uk

For more information visit

 **ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder**

 **ocr.org.uk**

 **facebook.com/ocrexams**

 **twitter.com/ocrexams**

 **instagram.com/ocrexaminations**

 **linkedin.com/company/ocr**

 **youtube.com/ocrexams**

We really value your feedback

Click to send us an autogenerated email about this resource. Add comments if you want to. Let us know how we can improve this resource or what else you need. Your email address will not be used or shared for any marketing purposes.



I like this



I dislike this

Please note – web links are correct at date of publication but other websites may change over time. If you have any problems with a link you may want to navigate to that organisation's website for a direct search.



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored. © OCR 2023 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

OCR operates academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers including A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Technicals and Cambridge Nationals.

OCR provides resources to help you deliver our qualifications. These resources do not represent any particular teaching method we expect you to use. We update our resources regularly and aim to make sure content is accurate but please check the OCR website so that you have the most up to date version. OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in these resources.

Though we make every effort to check our resources, there may be contradictions between published support and the specification, so it is important that you always use information in the latest specification. We indicate any specification changes within the document itself, change the version number and provide a summary of the changes. If you do notice a discrepancy between the specification and a resource, please [contact us](#).

You can copy and distribute this resource freely if you keep the OCR logo and this small print intact and you acknowledge OCR as the originator of the resource.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content: N/A

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR or are thinking about switching, you can request more information using our [Expression of Interest form](#).

Please [get in touch](#) if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support you in delivering our qualifications.