

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (EMC)

**OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in English
Language and Literature (EMC)**

H474

For first teaching in 2015

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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 responses 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 2 series overview

The focus of Paper 2 is made clear from the paper's title: 'The Language of Poetry and Plays'. It is a paper devised to elicit close analysis of given texts in the light of a directing question. We see a great range of approaches taken by candidates with methods and concepts applied from both linguistic and literary fields of study. This year, as in 2024, the most successful candidates spent most of their precious time in the examination on close reading analysis of the given poem or drama extract. Generalised and discursive approaches don't always fare well against the assessment objectives for the paper which are dominated by AO2, 'Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts'. That is a very specific focus and should be the governing approach to the questions in the paper. The other assessment objectives are either integral to this, such as AO1's requirement to 'apply concepts and methods' to close reading analysis, or should be skilfully embedded into the analysis, such as AO3's 'demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of contexts' and AO4's 'explore connections across texts informed by linguistic and literary concepts and methods'. The language of these assessment objectives is designed to show that they should be considered together and addressed together governed by the pervasive central focus provided by AO2 – the analysis of ways meanings are shaped. Happily for many candidates, this was exactly the approach they were familiar with and could apply in the examination room.

This year we had four new texts: Fatimah Asghar's *If They Come For Us*, Malika Booker's *Pepper Seed*; Inua Ellams' *Barber Shop Chronicles*, and Nina Raine's *Tribes*. It is understood that to launch a new text in a school or college is a major undertaking and it is not surprising that we had no entries this series for Booker or for Ellams. There were a number of centres entering candidates for Asghar and Raine, however, and that was pleasing to see. We would encourage centres to take the plunge, particularly if they feel these new texts would be appealing and challenging to the candidates they teach.

If there is a narrower range of texts being prepared in centres, the paper could then become dominated by a small number of texts: Blake, Duffy, Sam-La Rose, Williams, Butterworth and Shakespeare. Great as these writers are, they are not necessarily the only ones who will inspire, engage and challenge students in the great range of centres taking this specification. It is early days for these new texts and we hope to see more centres trying them out as time goes by.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- focused their analysis closely on the set poem and extract - showed great knowledge of and engagement with the poem and extract - showed precision in their discussion of how meanings were shaped in texts - made links and connections integral to the line of argument - engaged with the question in every aspect of the response.	- moved too quickly from discussing the provided poem and extract onto AO3 or AO4 (in Section A) - were unfamiliar at times with key aspects of the given poem or extract - identified methods and concepts without exploring the effect they had in the text - imported AO3 and AO4 material without making clear the purpose of their inclusion - wrote generally and discursively, making it difficult for examiners to see how material was relevant.

Section A overview

The poems chosen this year were all accessible and produced a full range of work which showed enthusiasm and engagement from candidates. Only a tiny number of responses were unsuccessful. Candidates had plenty to write about and short responses were rare on this paper this year. The questions posed were inviting and although there are always challenges, the questions were not obstacles to success. Those responses that made their focus on the question clear from the start were usually successful overall and more successful, generally, than those opening with introductions which were generic and pre-prepared rather than crafted to the poem and question.

Our messaging about the need to focus on the given poem has been worthwhile, with fewer responses attempting to write about large numbers of poems. One, or at most two, is the most productive approach, enabling candidates to show what they can do to analyse the given poem in detail. Contexts are showing some adventurousness at times and candidates are more aware of the need to use these contexts as part of analysis rather than simply including it as a standalone paragraph. As in previous reports, it is worth stating that all analytical approaches are welcome, both literary and linguistic. The identification of methods and concepts alone doesn't further the analysis, so candidates are encouraged to focus on the effects of those methods and concepts. Labelling of parts of speech isn't necessary unless it is important for the analytical point being made. The labelling can be inaccurate as the same words perform different grammatical functions depending on context, so it is better to focus on the function and effect rather than the label.

Introductions

Candidates should:

- make these attention-grabbing
- state one or two bold or challenging starting points **in relation to the question**
- avoid using them (in Section A) to list poems they wish to connect to – this will be rewarded when they do it in the body of the response
- avoid a pre-prepared contextual introduction stating facts about the writer's dates, life or other information; they should use this when it is relevant in their response.

Question 1

1 William Blake

Explore how Blake presents attitudes towards Christian beliefs in 'The Divine Image (I)' and make connections with one or two other poems from your collection.

You should consider Blake's use of poetic and stylistic techniques and significant literary or other relevant contexts.

[32]

Blake's popularity among centres continues to rise and his poems are now probably the most popular option in Section A. Blake's poetry has produced some truly impressive and engaged responses this year, and his writing is clearly accessible. The question focus on 'Christian beliefs' is central to this poem and to Blake's work as a whole. Much work has been done by candidates to explore Blake's beliefs, life and presentation of ideas through the collections. All that said, many of the themes in the wider collection such as the preciousness of childhood, poverty, oppression, exploitation, industrialisation and Nature are not foregrounded in this particular poem. This left some candidates with problems about how to engage with the poem. An obvious recourse was to use connections to poems which did explore those important themes through AO4 connections, but the risk was that little analysis was addressed to the given poem by less successful candidates. Successful candidates often used 'The Human Abstract' as a natural counter to the ideas in 'The Divine Image'. The poems clearly explore the same ideas, one from a rather dark and almost cynical viewpoint, the other with candour and faith. They share the same lexis and this made for some remarkable responses where the use of one poem truly did illuminate the other. One enterprising candidate included ideas from the poem 'A Divine Image' from the Experience collection which sent us to our texts, only to discover that it is omitted from the Oxford Edition used in this specification and only appeared in the BB version of the text. It is short enough to quote in full here:

A Divine Image

Cruelty has a Human Heart
And Jealousy a Human Face
Terror, the Human Form Divine
And Secrecy, the Human Dress

The Human Dress, is forged Iron
The Human Form, a fiery Forge
The Human Face, a Furnace seal'd
The Human Heart, its hungry Gorge.

As this poem is not in the collection, it can't count towards AO4 but it very much can count towards AO3 and this candidate had other connections to enable AO4 to be fully addressed. It is an example of study for AO3 context producing some revelatory insights. Other candidates wrote selectively about Blake's notebooks and his other poems such as 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', which showed great depth of understanding and helped to illuminate the given poem. For this to be successful, candidates need to remember that only poems in the collection can be used to address AO4 and contexts should only be explored when they precisely and economically lend insight into the given poem. This is the opposite of the approach taken by some less successful candidates who delivered far too much undirected contextual material, often in pre-prepared introductions, which did not contribute to the analysis or understanding shown of the given poem.

Several candidates pointed out that the poem has a set of discourse markers beginning with 'To' followed by 'For', 'For', 'Then' with the word 'And' repeated throughout to connect the discourse. There is an argument being made, which if paid attention to, helped candidates to engage more successfully with the ideas in the poem. It is a lesson for how to deal with these short but intricately structured poems: every word counts and if the right degree of focus is given to these details in the language, then there isn't time to spend on vague or undirected contexts or connections.

The four Divine Virtues form the core of the poem, but as some candidates pointed out they are very different. 'Mercy' implies a power imbalance; 'Pity' is an emotion which may benefit the bestower but have no positive impact on the object; 'Peace' is a different kind of word without the verbal/agency sense of the other Virtues, perhaps implying (as Blake's deviation by omission in the last iteration of the list may signify) that it doesn't rely entirely on individual humans but the combination of the other virtues; 'Love' doesn't have the specificity of the other Virtues, it is 'the greatest of these' and all-embracing. Time spent on this lexical analysis was time very well spent indeed.

That all-embracing, all-encompassing idea was key to some of the most successful responses. Inclusivity lies at the heart of the Christian beliefs presented in the poem. This is first marked by the word 'All' in its powerful place at the start of line two. This is extended in stanza four by the repetition of 'every' in line one. 'All' returns in stanza five line one, reinforced by the imperative modal 'must'. This is a strong theme in Romanticism found, for example, in Schiller's *Ode to Joy* (1785) used in the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The line 'heathen, Turk or jew' may well have been the most controversial and radical part of the poem for Blake's contemporaries but the poem as a whole leaves no doubt that Blake believed this with all his heart. This inclusivity theme allowed candidates to make connections to 'The Garden of Love' which is perhaps the most trenchant criticism of Christianity Blake wrote.

The theology of the poem is perhaps the most difficult for candidates to engage with, although it is clearly important for the question posed. The syntactic simplicity (which some very successful candidates related to the child-focused nature of many of Blake's poems) conceals some ambiguity. It begins simply enough in stanza one with the presentation of a 'positive feedback loop' as one candidate put it. But the idea of praying to abstract virtues rather than a God is an unusual idea. Some candidates made much of the potential cynicism behind 'pray in their distress' in that there is the idea that they *only* pray in their distress. Stanza two makes the radical claim that these virtues '**Is** our father dear': God comprises abstract virtue with the words 'father' and 'child' being used to soften and humanise the abstraction. The syntactic parallelism in the stanza is used to state that in Blake's view Man comprises the same virtues. Some candidates carefully explored the idea that the capitalisation of 'Man' may indicate that the phrase 'his child' refers to Christ, referencing Swedenborg with his rejection of the Trinity. Both humanity and Christ could be implied, as Christ took human form and Man is made in God's image. Stanza three is a kind of blazon where the virtues are connected to aspects of humanity with the repetition of 'human' to underline how the abstract quantities are embodied in Man. One candidate pointed out that the line 'And Love, the human form divine' is elevated above the other lines in its echo of the poem's title. 'Peace is the human dress' some candidates read as implying the virtue of Peace is something contingent on the other virtues rather than embodied. The final stanza pulls all of these sometimes perplexing and complicated ideas into a conclusion: re-stating in simple terms and with a profound tone of certainty and belief that Man itself is deserving of love because we embody those same virtues found in God, and therefore God dwells within us. This is a radical inspiration which elevates mankind, and by never mentioning the church or religion, makes its own judgement on the value of institutionalised religion.

It isn't possible to do justice to the range, quality and insight candidates brought to this poem. There were many other approaches and ideas. The analysis of form was widespread but it was hard for candidates to make very much of it. Rhyming patterns are there but not regular; rhythm is mainly iambic but sometimes trochaic. It was rare to see a response where discussion of form helped the analysis. The regularity of the quatrains and the rhythmic qualities creates the sense that this is a harmonious whole. Structural aspects such as the movement of the argument through discourse markers, end-stopping and use of enjambment, placement of words within the line and above all the pattern of repetition, with its variations, were more useful in many cases than discussion of form in terms of rhythm and rhyme.

Question 2

2 Emily Dickinson

Explore how Dickinson presents ideas created by a memorable sight in 'I Like to See it Lap the Miles' and make connections with one or two other poems from your collection.

You should consider Dickinson's use of poetic and stylistic techniques and significant literary or other relevant contexts.

[32]

There were fewer responses to Dickinson than in previous series, but perhaps a wider range of ideas. Like the Blake poem, the chosen Dickinson poem does not foreground the themes and ideas found elsewhere in the collection, although the methods are typical of Dickinson's style and approach. This made finding poems to connect with rather harder than normal in that it doesn't revolve around intense personal spiritual states and emotions or the big questions of life and the afterlife. Even Nature, although present as an idea, isn't foregrounded to the same extent as in some other poems. The question's focus on 'ideas created by a memorable sight' connected best with 'A narrow Fellow in the grass'. 'There's a Certain Slant of Light', which focuses on something witnessed, also made an interesting comparison. At times, other connections did not suit the question quite so well as these. There were plenty of excellent responses excellence though, with some very careful and detailed close analysis. Many saw the jaunty rhythm and tight quatrains as creating forward momentum and a sense of speed and excitement.

The object of the poem is referred to only as 'it' and this posed the first challenge. A number of candidates did not identify the thing being seen as a train: instead, they read the planted horse imagery as direct description rather than a running metaphor. This made it difficult for the readings of certain moments in the poem. The less successful responses, after a few paragraphs of tentative analysis went on to other more familiar poems where they struggled, at times, to find a question focus.

The most successful responses registered the uncommon freedom and joy of the opening with playfulness in the 'like', 'lick' internal half rhyme and the playful metaphor of 'feed itself'. The cross-stanza enjambment between 'step' and 'around' was identified by some as an almost perfect example of mimesis, enacting the phrase 'a prodigious step' perfectly. The energy and pace derives partly from insistent repetition of 'And' creating a breathless excited tone. The personification in the phrase 'supercilious peer' continues the mischievous and coltish creation of the train as seen from a bird's-eye view as it passes the rough and ephemeral rail-side buildings. The phrase 'by the Ribs of Roads' creates an impression that the structures are organic rather than man-made. A favourite phrase for one candidate was the line 'And then a Quarry pare/ To fit its sides' which was explained in terms of cinematic imagery, imagining the land appearing to part to allow the train through.

The variation in pace in the poem helps to create the overall structure, as the volta starts as the train goes uphill 'Complaining all the while'. The stretching out is created by the multi-syllabled 'complaining' and the rhythm of 'all the while'. The stretching and slowing continues with 'horrid – hooting stanza'. The onomatopoeia adds much to the impact and the unusual 'stanza' seems to mean something like a metatextual reference to the poem itself. The stanza deviates with its extra line which is used to release the energy of the train as it peaks the incline and 'Then chase(s) itself down Hill'. The enactment that Dickinson packs into the phonology in this poem is the equal of anything she has written of this kind. The 'horrid – hooting' becomes a triumphal 'neigh' on its downhill and return home journey. The word 'Boanerges' stumped many, but perhaps the lesson is that if one doesn't understand a word or phrase, there are plenty of others to write about instead. For reference, here is the Bible verse: 'And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he [Christ] surnamed [*nicknamed*] them Boanerges, which is, the Sons of Thunder. Mark 3:17' So, a thunderous sound which the explosive word itself conjures. The dashes in the last stanza work as brakes, to slow the unruly triumphalism of the train, aided by the 'Star...Stop' alliteration and positioning of 'Stop' in the powerful first word in the line position. The oxymoronic 'docile and omnipotent' is a wonderfully complex phrase encompassing sweet quietness with an immense hidden power. And in the last line the train is home 'At its own stable door – ' This final dash implies a finally achieved stasis.

It is worth saying that the dashes are instrumental in achieving the lightness and rattling pace of the poem.

The poem was written from a viewpoint which suggests high altitude – we see the train move through the landscape from above. Several responses saw this as being from a God-like perspective and the train journey being (as in *Because I could not stop for Death*) a metaphor for a human life. What is clear is that Dickinson lived in an age where there was no drone footage or anything like it, so to have imagined this perspective is a wondrous feat of the imagination. It is a very lovable poem and one that really demonstrates how Dickinson's techniques work. Many responses showed enjoyment of the poem and recognised that Dickinson probably enjoyed herself writing it, too. It certainly sheds a new rather lovely light on what could inspire her other than the sometimes tormented and harrowing mindscapes in her other poetry – although there is lots to love in that too.

Question 3

3 Malika Booker

Explore how Booker presents ideas about food and family relationships in 'Brixton Market' and make connections with one or two other poems from your collection.

You should consider Booker's use of poetic and stylistic techniques and significant literary or other relevant contexts.

[32]

There were no responses reported to this text.

Question 4

4 Fatima Asghar

Explore how Asghar presents ideas about being separated from loved ones in 'Partition (Ullu partitions the apartment in two-)' and make connections with one or two other poems from your collection.

You should consider Asghar's use of poetic and stylistic techniques and significant literary or other relevant contexts.

[32]

This text was tackled by a number of centres and it was pleasing to see such well-prepared work covering the whole ability range. The question was particularly appropriate, inviting and encouraging depth and detail in almost all. Separation is a core theme in the collection, with six poems in the book titled 'Partition' threaded through each section of text. Three of these poems are in the collection set for study. This gives candidates some excellent poems for connecting to the given poem. 'Kal' and 'Ghareeb' are also useful poems to shed light on the given poem. Separation is such an important element in Asghar's life and the cultures she writes about, there is much to discuss.

Overhanging all is the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and the destructive conflict that ensued. This poem is on an intimate domestic scale, in contrast. Most responses took the voice of the poem to be Asghar herself and that seems right with references to her uncle, her mother and her aunt. It is about the impact of separations in a family. 'Ullu', or uncle 'partitions the apartment in two'. The poem begins with a simple separation performed by a family member to part other family members. Behind lurks the collective memory of a more terrible partition. The clues 'Toys and books on our side' helps to construct the voice as that of a child and the poem as a reminiscence. It is important that there is no explanation for the partition (as several candidates pointed out). The word 'cutting' makes the act seem cruel and the word 'deserted' makes the act seem pointless. The world is separated in other ways too. 'Auntie A' has the world of practical modern life: 'refrigerator, sink & TV'; the speaker has 'toys and books', symbolic items of childhood. Asghar uses the word 'rations' which candidates saw as evoking ideas of war and famine. The speaker appears not to be alone with pronouns 'we' and 'us' but we are not told who the other person is, which focuses our attention on the speaker and her isolation. 'not allowed to cross' is a simple injunction that is full of the collective memory of imposed borders.

The voice changes at the end of the second stanza to direct and poignant address: 'I'm ten/ & haven't been hugged in a long time'. The simple present tense takes the speaker and the reader back into the immediacy of the recent past and the enjambment across the stanza works well as a technique to embody separation. At the core of the poem, using syntactic parallelism, Asghar writes:

'Allah made a barrier between me & my mom.

Ullu makes a barrier between me & my aunt.'

The repetition with deviation was spotted by many candidates and they were able to make the point of how the lines show her life has been dominated by separations. One the act of fate, the other of the purposeless actions of a relative - but both with a similar effect.

Those lines lead to a volta 'When he leaves', giving a sense of an oppressive male dominator orchestrating the separation which Auntie A suffers from as much as the children. The shift in the final two stanzas is a positive one, with the image of the two children sitting 'at the base of the blue wall' using laughter to communicate their existence to their Auntie A and she returning the same signal. The ending of the poem with this laughter continuing, as she remembers it, 'for hours', with 'hands pressed to the

felt' of the wall, 'laughing, laughing' shows resistance to separation and the triumph of the human spirit. The last line remains, though: 'unable to see each other'. The use of laughter to express hope and affirmation of existence against separation is powerful but the fact of separation, like death, remains a truth that doesn't alter regardless of any feelings towards it.

Candidates explored the simple tools used by the poet: an informal tone, use of ampersands giving a sense of almost reportage note-taking. There is little rhetoric in the poem and only loose organisation, as if the poem is a collection of memories surrounding a particular moment. The language is crafted to sound like that of a child, assisted by the use of the present simple tense to recreate the voice and feeling of the past. The only past tense in the poem is 'Allah made a barrier' marking out that event, the death of her mother, when Asghar was four. It was the turning point of her life: all other separations are lesser versions of that moment. The poem flows freely using enjambment to create a sense of memories as they rise in the mind. Candidates clearly knew the poem well and were able to explore it in detail and with confidence. A lot of work had gone on to familiarise the candidates with Asghar's life, her views and ideas and they were able to bring these to bear in analysis of the poem.

Question 5

5 Carol Ann Duffy

Explore how Duffy presents attitudes towards commitment in 'Betrothal' and make connections with one or two other poems from your collection.

You should consider Duffy's use of poetic and stylistic techniques and significant literary or other relevant contexts.

[32]

Duffy remains a very popular choice, although perhaps overtaken this year by Blake. She crafts her poems with great skill and the *Rapture* anthology showcases poetry absorbing influences from the past, to present very modern relationships. Candidates rarely are at a loss for things to write about, whichever poem is set. 'Betrothal' is a relatively long poem, exploiting repetition and patterning throughout. Successful responses found ways to give shape to the analysis. The question focus of 'commitment' is completely central to the poem. That creates a problem in that responses can become repetitive and one-note if care isn't taken to shape the analysis. One very successful approach which some candidates took was to look at the many ways this is an unusual, even an unnatural poem. There was, however, a kind of misconception apparent in a number of responses where candidates identified the sonnet as the archetypal form for love poetry and inferred that any poem not written in sonnet form is deviating in its form. Robbie Burns' immortal 'My love is like a red, red rose' is an archetypal love poem and it is in ballad form. There is no archetypal form for love poetry; not all sonnets are love poems: Owen's 'Anthem For Doomed Youth', for example and many others. So the matter of form is more nuanced and complex than some candidates believe to be the case.

The addressee is silent throughout; there is only one voice: the speaker of the poem. There is a relentlessness about that voice through nine stanzas, rarely faltering or changing note. It is mainly monosyllabic. Pronouns feature so much that it becomes almost a study in pronouns; there are no collective pronouns. The rhythm and the rhyme has a relentlessness that echoes the voice and the use of short lines foregrounds rhyme in particular. The patterning 'I will...' 'Make me' throughout is striking. Several candidates discussed the effect of these things combined as having the chant-like effect of a mantra. All of these things show that this is an unusual poem, some may conclude it has aspects which are unlikeable too. We know from other poems in the collection such as 'Rapture' that Duffy is fully capable of lyricism, gentleness, delicacy. These things are largely absent here and it raises the question

of what the addressee of the poem, if we suppose there to be one, would be likely to make of it. It is, in some respects, terrifying.

Many responses began with the title, registering its slightly archaic connotations and its relevance to the question. Lust is a theme explored elsewhere and the focus here is on a much more traditional conception of subservience to a more powerful partner in a traditional marriage: 'I will obey, I will obey'. The first stanza was often described by candidates as referencing *Wuthering Heights* or alternatively Myra Hindley and the Moors Murders. Lots of candidates knew the story behind this. It is problematic to compare oneself to Myra Hindley in a poem in this way as several pointed out. The actions of Hindley and her relationship with Ian Brady were extreme: what does that imply about the addressee of the poem that the speaker is willing to do the same? One excellent response made the distinction between the speaker of the poem, who seems oblivious to the dangers implicit in these references, and Duffy the poet who has strategically planted these references. This is a key distinction for understanding what kind of poem this is.

The next stanza has equally questionable declaratives 'I'll dig my own grave'. Death and the willingness to die or kill oneself hang over a number of Duffy's poems and again there are, as several successful candidates pointed out, questionable implications. There is no voice asking that the speaker should do these things, they are volunteered. The unquestioning surrender of one's life is a disturbing idea. The next stanza explores the image more: 'I'll sleep in my blankets of mud' where 'sleep' and 'blanket' are counterpoised by the stark word 'mud'. This is a way of showing that the speaker 'will be good'. To please the addressee these are the extremes the speaker feels are called for to prove commitment. Extremities are explored in the river images where Ophelia, or Woolf, are referenced. Some responses discussed Woolf committing suicide because of her passionate love, but according to the biographer Hermione Lee it was brought on by a recurrence of mental illness. Other responses referenced 'The Lady of Shalott'. One excellent reading of 'I'll float far away/, gargling my vows' read it as the expression of a suppressed desire to *escape* commitment. 'I'll sprawl in my dress' was a favourite line as it is a rare faintly erotic image in the poem, although it probably references Millais' painting of Ophelia. Water imagery gives way to fire imagery in a stanza which has faint resonances of Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. There is a slightly different tone in the penultimate stanza where the phrase 'I'll blush like a baby' is unusual for the tone of the poem as a whole and is foregrounded by the half rhyme with 'lady'. The final stanza juxtaposes the 'I do' of the marriage ceremony with the scattering of ashes after a cremation. Marriage and death are blended as though they are one and the same or one leads to another.

Many responses pointed out the movement through the elements which help to structure this and other poems, particularly 'Answer'. It is as if the commitment must be tested to death against the laws of Nature. My favourite responses in the light of how unusual a poem this is, looked at it as having a satirical and ironic edge created by the distance between the speaker and the poet. The candidates made this interpretation work by pointing out that it isn't personalised in terms of specific times or places or events like many other of the poems. There are no details of any relationship present as in 'Hour', for instance. Unlike in other poems, the speaker is a persona rather than to be taken as Duffy herself. Trying to fit this poem into some kind of biographical reading simply doesn't work as there is nothing apart from its position in the collection to go on, and that is thin evidence. It stands as a kind of antidote to biographical readings of the poems. The extremity of the desperation to commit ironically undermines itself – if the commitment is so deep and strong, why the need to profess it so desperately?

As a satire about desperation in love, a lot about the poem can be explained. The argument was strongest in responses we saw that highlighted the juxtaposition between marriage and death in the final stanza. Other readings are certainly possible, but it is hard to maintain an interpretation of the poem as expressing straightforward commitment. It paints the addressee as a demanding and dangerous partner, **or** the speaker as unbalanced and of unsound mind: imagining death as a means of showing commitment. It was encouraging to see so many responses challenging a straightforward reading of the poem and suggesting that Duffy was asking us to judge carefully the quality and nature of any relationship based on the levels of commitment expressed here.

Question 6

6 Jacob Sam-La Rose

Explore how Sam-La Rose captures a particular moment in time in 'Plummeting' and make connections with one or two other poems from your collection.

You should consider Sam-La Rose's use of poetic and stylistic techniques and significant literary or other relevant contexts.

[32]

Jacob Sam-La Rose's collection really engages the candidates who study it. This engagement means that there is often very deep understanding and extensive knowledge of the collection as whole and of Sam-La Rose's life and culture as it bears on the poems. There is very often notable enthusiasm in how candidates tackle the poems, even relish. That said, for a minority this poem was one that posed some problems in that it deviates to a degree from the topics of other poems such as music or family and culture. Some could not identify the activity taking place in the poem although 'ball at hoop' was a clue. This left some responses, very much the minority, struggling to construct a response around the question without a full grasp of the context. There is enough in the poem to achieve this, but knowing it was about practising basketball would have given some candidates more confidence and enabled them to spend longer on analysing the poem before making connections to others. The question was inviting and open, about capturing a moment in time.

The most successful responses had read the notes at the back of the collection outlining Terrance Hayes and his collection *Hip Logic*. This gave them a head start into the form of the 11-line poem and the unusual patterning in the words at the ends of the line, each word being built from letters in the title, *Plummeting*. Not many were able to make much of this apart from the neatness of the concept but the most successful saw the unusual lexis: 'tune', 'lump', 'melt', 'plum', 'plume', 'lung', 'time', 'pelting', 'line', 'plunge', 'mute' as central to the construction of the poem. It would be a good question to pose the poet whether this lexis/title came first and the poem was constructed around it – or the other way round. It really works and makes the poem unusually effective when combined with the activity of practising basketball. The 'lump' lexeme is difficult to incorporate into a poem – it is stubbornly unpoetic – but there is genius in using alchemical imagery to reveal the experimental process whereby discipline turns lead ('lump') into 'gold'. As one response put it, 'the poetic technique is a magical transformation in itself'. Another example is the word 'plum' with its half rhyme 'plume'. Plum is an unusual adjective for the colour of the sky at sunset, but here it is really effective and evocative. 'Plume' is another hard word to incorporate naturally, but the line 'sporting a corona of sweat like a plume / of peacock's feathers' is extraordinary. One response (and in marking responses one learns so much about the poems) thought this line derived from stills from sports photography where the sweat is captured in fast-frame style as it sprays from a moment of exertion. 'Peacock's feathers' then becomes the rainbow effect in the image. This is a perfect reference for the question 'a moment in time'. Once one reads something like this in a response, one can't see the line of poetry any other way. (Although there are plenty of other excellent readings of the words 'corona' and 'peacock' in terms of pride and regality.)

The question focus 'capture a moment in time' is built into the poem itself. The third-person opening 'He works it' frames the poem neatly as a detailed observation of someone who is presented as oblivious to being watched. 'ear accustomed to the tune / of hard play' indicates complete absorption in the moment. A number of phrases reference the passing of time: 'until the sky turns plum', 'failing light', 'time passing' set up the frame of exertion to achieve something within a limited time. The use of present tense throughout was commented on by many candidates as producing immediacy and involvement as well as a moment-by-moment effect. The many hours of practice indicated by repetition of the rhythmic 'left, right, launch-step' build to a climactic moment 'pelting / ball at hoop' where the cross-stanza enjambment

mimics the trajectory of the basketball. The moment of waiting is filled with consciousness of the price paid for this moment: 'deep bone-ache'. The yearning for success is expressed in the adjectives 'flawless' and 'unimpeachable'. The moment of truth in the final single line is presented ambiguously and it was a joy to read the wide variety of interpretations. Was the rim 'mute' because the shot was so perfect it passed through silently? Is the word 'mute' there to indicate failure, a loss of some kind? Does 'mute' relate to the title of the collection *Breaking Silence*? Is 'mute' connected to 'tune' in line one in some way? Is there a contradiction between the 'wide mouth' and the lack of sound? Is this about an attempt to find an identity and voice that ultimately fails? Those who look for a definitive answer won't like the way the poem ends, but for some of the most successful responses it brought out intense engagement and creativity.

There were a number of links possible: 'Speechless I' where the clash over the guitar is a decisive and divisive moment in time. In 'Song for a Spent 100w Bulb' there is a minute, forensic examination of a source of high energy in the moment connecting to the energy and intensity in 'Plummeting'.

Exemplar 1

6		The title of the collection 'Breaking Silence' suggests Sam - La Rose's consideration of significant or pivotal moments in his life and how they have contributed to his expression as a person. The poem 'Plummeting' offers a snapshot into a boy's basketball training. The plethora of figurative language portrays the reward of his hard work. Similarly, in 'Speechless I' figurative language is used to depict the moment that Sam - La Rose is finally able to connect with the students he is teaching. Both poems consider the importance of hard work in relation to one moment as well as the rewarding nature of creativity.
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An example of a focused, economical and purposeful introduction. There is immediate focus on the specific question. It is clear and identifies one or two key ideas which will be developed in the response.

Section B overview

The extracts were well chosen and provided ample opportunity for candidates to analyse. Choosing these extracts is always difficult: they should be self-contained and yet present in an extract a flavour of the text as a whole. The questions are designed not to present a barrier or difficulty for candidates but simply a focus.

Every year, the same guidance is given in these reports: the candidates' main focus must be on analysis of the extract provided. These are substantial extracts and there is not time or scope for spending large parts of the response on AO3 context, which should be economically embedded within the analysis rather than in standalone paragraphs. The marks available are mainly for AO2 analysis and efficient responses incorporate AO1 and AO3 into that.

As the questions are simple and open, there is often little credit to be gained through introductions defining or contextualising the extract. If the candidate wants to use a particular line of argument to organise the response, then that is worth laying out in an introduction. Generic pre-prepared introductions have no value.

This year, the vast majority of responses were on *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It is a great play, and the question was inviting, but it would be preferable to see a wider range of texts studied. For candidates, of course, it is a text new to them and there is always plenty to write about.

Use of critics in responses



In A Level Literature specifications candidates are rewarded for referring to critics in their responses. **In this specification, A Level English Language and Literature, the main focus is on analysis of the shaping of meaning (AO2)** rather than broad or general critical interpretation. If it is insightful, it will be rewarded either under AO1 or AO2, but it is not required and may be a misuse of candidates' time in preparing for the examination to spend it learning critical quotations.

Question 7

7 William Shakespeare: *Othello*

Explore how Shakespeare presents Othello in this extract from *Othello*.

You should consider the use of dramatic and stylistic techniques in the extract, its significance within the play and any relevant dramatic or other contexts.

[32]

Is it possible to have too inviting an extract? This is a climactic moment in the play and one with great power and drama. It is long, as these extracts have to be, so responses require careful organisation. The question focus is on the presentation of Othello and there is more than enough to go on in the extract. Many candidates wanted to contextualise Othello's language in the extract through referencing Iago's influence on 'The Othello Music' (see G. Wilson Knight's seminal essay). This risked, at times, losing the focus on the question and producing a general essay more suited to A Level English Literature rather than the close analysis required in this specification. The most successful responses focused on analytical detail from the start on Othello's language.

Several responses traced the breakdown of adjacency pairing through the opening lines. Othello's 'Why? What art thou' is not a clear response to Desdemona's preceding declarative but is deliberately insulting in the use of 'What' and 'thou'. The insult continues 'Lest being like one of heaven, the devils themselves / Should fear to seize thee.' He orders her to swear she is loyal to perjure herself because otherwise her angelic appearance 'like one of heaven' would make the devils preparing to take her off to hell hesitate to seize her. Many excellent responses used moments like these to show the duality in Othello's mind – he sees she is 'like one of heaven' although the actor has freedom to inject bitterness into the word 'like'. Just where adjacency pairing is what the audience most wants, Othello refuses it:

Desdemona To whom, my lord? With whom? How am I false?

Othello: Ah Desdemon, away, away, away!

Othello's refusal to engage frustrates us particularly as the repetition indicates an urgent need for physical separation if he is to control the upsurge of his feelings for her.

Oddly, the great speech of Othello's 'Had it pleased heaven' received very little attention from many candidates other than comments about Othello's domination of the floor. Oddly, too, a number of candidates wrote about Othello switching between verse and prose although it is blank verse throughout. The speech is a great outpouring of self-pity. He places himself in the position of the Biblical Job and declares that he could suffer anything that God could punish him with and still face it with patience. Othello's characteristic grandiosity here creates intense irony in that, as several responses pointed out, he hasn't experienced any suffering other than that generated by his own gullibility. But worse than God's afflictions is to be made 'The fixed figure for the time of scorn/ To point his slow unmoving finger at!' The wonderful fricative alliteration expresses the intolerable agony of public shame. The way 'unmoving' extends and intensifies the word 'slow' was spotted by one excellent candidate. The same candidate summarised this part of the speech as saying that Othello would rather have God as an enemy, than gossips and rumour mongers. The truth perhaps comes at last in the speech where Othello faces up to his chief vulnerability 'there where I have garnered up heart,/ The fountain from which my current runs...' meaning Desdemona herself. The imagery here is the reason why this seems more authentic than the overblown imagery of Job at the beginning. Desdemona is the fountain that feeds the current of his soul. That Othello can express this shows, perhaps, that deep down he knows it. The volta in the line break 'dries up – to be discarded thence/ Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads/ To knot and gender in' shows a

plunge from authentic feeling into melodrama. The imagery, again, is revealing: comparing a fountain with a freely flowing current to a 'cistern' where toads copulate. To keep Desdemona as his wife and allow her to have sexual relations with other men is the most intolerable suffering of all. That is the thing that 'Patience', which would have seen Othello through the afflictions of Job, would not be able to countenance

Desdemona's plaintive declaratives and questions in the following exchanges are used by Shakespeare as springboards for the expression of Othello's torment. He thinks she is as honest as 'summer flies' breeding in a slaughterhouse: in other words, amoral. She is a 'weed' but one 'who are so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet/That the sense aches at thee.' The yearning in this line and the beauty of the language goes back to that 'Othello Music' but we see the beauty as that part of Othello which loves Desdemona still. The unrotten part of his soul. The second outpouring from Othello is noticeably less coherent than the earlier one. Again there is the continuation of Othello's duality, acknowledging that Desdemona is 'fair paper...(a) goodly book'. The language suggests incredulity at the idea that this book was made 'to write whore upon'. Shakespeare keeps the audience utterly in the moment as Othello speaks and we hope for him to realise the truth. But Desdemona's word 'committed' catches Othello's distracted attention 'What committed! Committed!' The imagery of outrage piles up in the speech. Othello suggests that if he were to speak aloud what Desdemona has supposedly done, his cheeks would turn to bellows and burn modesty to cinders. He has such confidence and repeats the word 'committed' many times but never states what he believes she has done. This is the way Shakespeare keeps tension building. Desdemona engages in dialogue for the first time since the opening of the extract, defending herself from the imputation of being a 'strumpet'. Othello simply repeats the accusation as a question and repeats it again using 'whore' in the face of Desdemona's denial. Othello's 'Is't possible' interested several candidates. Is he expressing doubt in his accusations? Is he referring to Desdemona's denials – how is it possible she should deny it?

One of the very successful responses explored how Othello runs out of steam in the extract and reaches a kind of deadlock towards the end. He doesn't engage with her denials except to accuse her again, and his domination of the floor shrinks as his energy levels decline. The audience hope that when Desdemona says 'O, heaven forgive us!' that the plural pronoun indicates that there is a chance of their emerging together from this horrific moment of exhausting conflict. But the response from Othello is a bitterly mocking pseudo-apology: 'I cry you mercy then:/ I took you for that cunning whore of Venice'. The withering irony is intended by Othello as a devastating shift of perspective denouncing her honour and credibility; but as one brilliant line in a response had it: 'Othello is exactly correct to apologise for mistaking Desdemona for the archetypal Venetian whore she has no resemblance to – the irony is on him'.

There is much more to write about but also it is worth pointing out that it is possible to analyse the extract without recourse to using other parts of the play too heavily or referencing Iago very much at all. The impact of Iago is understood; we can witness it in the language. It is implicit. Contexts here lie mainly in the lexis. There is a field of religiously derived words and images which run right through the extract and speak to the way that religion penetrated every aspect of discourse in the play, reflective of its importance in society. There are also sexually derived words and images which give some insight into the neuroses and fears of Shakespeare's society. These two lexical fields are in conflict throughout the extract. Othello's terror of being socially shamed and scorned is an important aspect of Jacobean culture where honour and reputation are the key to the social standing of an individual.

Question 8

8 Oscar Wilde: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Explore how Wilde presents the relationship between Jack and Gwendolen in this extract from *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

You should consider the use of dramatic and stylistic techniques in the extract, its significance within the play and any relevant dramatic or other contexts.

[32]

There were too few responses to this question to give any flavour of successful and less successful responses.

Question 9

9 Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Explore how Williams presents the opening of the play in this extract from *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

You should consider the use of dramatic and stylistic techniques in the extract, its significance within the play and any relevant dramatic or other contexts.

[32]

This text is enormously popular and dominates the entry. Past reports have repeatedly encouraged candidates to focus on the given extract and to restrict AO3 to places in the argument when context informs the reader and supports the argument. There were many responses which set about reading the extract, the opening of the play, as foreshadowing what is to come. That is a perfectly legitimate approach, but it led to responses which repeatedly referenced other parts of the play in place of precise and detailed analysis of the extract itself. There is so much to write about in this very long extract which is packed with incident and detail. A more productive approach is to just briefly note the one or two key ways this prepares the audience for what is to come, rather than using prolepsis as the centre of the response as a whole. Examiners agreed that it cannot be expected that candidates cover everything in the extract, and they looked at the quality of what candidates did address rather than penalising for what could be seen as omissions.

The stage directions didn't feature in some responses at all, they began with the dialogue. Other responses spent more than half the time on this opening description. Some excellent responses spent time on explaining how unusual this style of scene setting is. It isn't part of the script. The audience don't hear it and lots of it they would not be able to see or feel, 'the warm breath of the brown river', for example. Who is it for? Are these descriptions instructions to a producer or director of stage or screen? Are they for readers who purchase the text? What is the intention behind them? One candidate wrote about them as an attempt on Williams' part to exercise control over the presentation of his work. Many candidates wrote about the blending of expressionistic and naturalistic elements in the stage setting and identified the directions as part of this, particularly in the use of colour and the senses as a whole. It is common to see responses refer to this text as a 'novel' in error, but this kind of writing is perhaps why candidates make that slip as it is decidedly novelistic. There was plenty of knowledge shown by candidates about the 'Elysian Fields', about the Blues, about New Orleans as representative of the New South. Close attention to detail was very often shown in the 'weathered grey' reference, and 'rickety

stairs' which several candidates saw as symbolic of Blanche's tremulous progress through the play. Colour, in particular, was very well handled in the responses. We didn't see many responses where the word 'raffish' was defined and explored. Attention to individual key words can sometimes be really informative; here the word means something which is a bit disreputable, louche, perhaps, but somehow attractive. It is a perfect single-word descriptor of what Williams seeks to project as the essential polysemous quality of New Orleans. One great response reminded us that Williams lived in or near this quarter of New Orleans at the time of writing the play and all he had to do was to lean out of his window to see, hear and smell the city he describes in this stage direction.

The opening dialogue was where some responses started. There was great attention paid by many to how the characters were named and presented in this opening. They are all minor characters, Eunice the only one named; various occupations were used as labels but the label for the unnamed black woman was singled out by many responses as indicative of racial stereotyping. This is a sensitive and difficult issue where historical texts use language which is offensive. In a number of scripts candidates used asterisks to elide writing the word in full. This shows how such matters require very careful management when using these texts with young people.

The word in the stage direction 'overlapping' was picked up on by several candidates who characterised the opening as cacophonous, energising and typifying the hustle and bustle of a chaotic and busy corner of the city, squeezed between the tramway and the river. Within the chaotic overlapping (which would probably not be audible in the theatre) there are many telling details. The opening line '...she says St Barnabus would send out his dog to lick her...' must be one of the least recognisable opening lines to any famous play. The disreputable suggestiveness sets a tone as does the 'Four Deuces' where customers are fleeced, as does the vendor's 'Red hots' which adds its own insinuation into the mix. The 'Blue Moon cocktail' and its knockout qualities are clearly well known about in the community, yet another element in the 'raffish charm'.

Almost all responses gave a secure account of the next section of the text with the introduction of Stanley, Mitch and Stella – a clear step up in ascent of importance of characters. The dress, the behaviour, the language and what it indicated about status and relationships were all solidly dealt with by the majority of responses. For responses to rise above the general level they needed to find those extra details. When Eunice says 'Tell Steve to get him a poor boy's sandwich 'cause nothing's left here' one or two candidates saw a chance to make a comparison between that and Stella's receipt of the bloody package, in her acquiescent way, as part of her role of homemaker and cook. Eunice has lived her life in New Orleans and knows how to deal with these men both verbally and (later) physically. These responses saw something others missed and also were an object lesson in how to incorporate AO3 seamlessly as part of the analysis.

The scene climaxes with the entry of Blanche and this was also a strong part of many responses. There was often good or excellent attention to detail in the exploration of the costume and its significance, her reaction to the address and setting, the theme of light here and in the play as a whole, the moth (according to one response, 'a kind of bug that you long to squish'). The most successful responses analysed the tenderness of Williams' language in the stage directions and discussed Williams' identification with the character of Blanche. This part is where the candidates' desire to make multiple links to other parts of the play detracted in some cases from closely analysing what is here in the extract. The response is written for an audience (the examiner) who knows the story and the text very well and doesn't need the foreshadowing spelling out, especially where it involves retelling of other parts of the play. The marks available are mainly for AO2 analysis of the shaping of meaning such as the tone of Eunice's line at the end of the extract 'That's where you are now', the monosyllables resonating with a heavy sense of foreboding for Blanche.

Exemplar 2

		In conclusion, Williams presents the opening
		of the play as an introduction of the misfit
		populated location of New Orleans and presents
		the 'raffish charm' of the place that presents a
		home to misfit characters, particularly Blanche.
		The introduction serves as a foreshadowing

		device that exposes the realistically complex
		lives of the people who pass through the city.

An example of a focused, economical and purposeful conclusion. It summarises selectively some key ideas from the response without repeating points exhaustively and ends on a stylish but meaningful final sentence.

Question 10

10 Inua Ellams: *Barber Shop Chronicles*

Explore how Ellams presents issues of language and identity in this extract from *Barber Shop Chronicles*.

You should consider the use of dramatic and stylistic techniques in the extract, its significance within the play and any relevant dramatic or other contexts.

[32]

There were no responses reported to this text.

Question 11

11 Nina Raines: *Tribes*

Explore how Raines presents Sylvia in this extract from *Tribes*.

You should consider the use of dramatic and stylistic techniques in the extract, its significance within the play and any relevant dramatic or other contexts.

[32]

There were just a few responses to this text and it is therefore difficult to give a general sense of successful and less successful approaches. The extract comes just over halfway through the text and the question focus is on Sylvia. The responses we saw were thoroughly prepared and showed knowledge of the complex interconnections around the theme of language.

One response began 'Tribes is a play about a very dysfunctional family that still manages to function...' an accurate summation. Sylvia was seen, correctly, as the central focus of the extract with her being protected from Christopher by the rest of the characters. Christopher promises not 'to make her cry' near the start but by the end she is crying 'I just get very upset still'. The extract traces how and why Sylvia sheds tears. The extract opens with Sylvia signing to Billy (indicated by the bold text) that Christopher doesn't like her. Billy denies this to bolster her, meanwhile Beth, Christopher's wife, hectors him quietly '(in an undertone)' to stop him from upsetting her. Sylvia hears the comments reminding us that she is going deaf but isn't deaf yet and her '(loudly) No, it's okay. You can make me cry' was interpreted by candidates as her pushing back and asserting herself as well as underlining that she can hear their talk about her. The tension rises indicated by Ruth's 'is it really stressful in here? – I mean, hot in here' the repair reveals rather than conceals the source of discomfort. Daniel, who is fascinated by Sylvia, engages her in an apparently innocent discussion about signing 'What do you do if you want to pose a hypothesis in sign?' His low frequency lexis is designed to impress but, as candidates saw, her response 'Like what?' deliberately diverges from him as a kind of threat to negative face. Her 'You can't say "would" in sign. Or "if"' draws Christopher in who had professed at the start that 'the last thing I want to do is make her cry' but he can't resist cutting Sylvia off as she tries to add to her answer and instead gives the impression of being interested in what she has said but in fact attempts to dominate her: 'I do words, Sylvia, that's what I do'. The extract becomes a kind of two-pronged attack on her initiated by Daniel and joined enthusiastically by Christopher. The attack isn't on Sylvia personally but on signing as a language, which Christopher characterises as 'black and white' making 'you a bit black and white'. This threat to Sylvia's negative face is countered by her defiant response 'Deaf people can be more honest'. Christopher's 'More honest? Or more tactless?' was seen by candidates as showing Christopher's relish for attacking Sylvia. She counters by backchanneling 'Are you asking me whether signing makes you a coarser person because signing is a coarse language? Whether deaf people are emotionally deaf as well, lack empathy'. This escalation shows Sylvia's boldness and refusal to be intimidated. Beth's 'No, he's not asking that.' is countered by Daniel's 'Yes, he is asking that.' Beth is attempting to ameliorate the tension: Daniel is being truthful. Sylvia's 'Well then I'll be coarse soon' reminds them all that she is becoming deaf and using signing more soon. In Christopher's view, an inferior language will be her main way of communicating. Her line draws everyone's attention and although done briefly, she isn't afraid to take the floor against two male antagonists in an unfamiliar social situation. She puts herself and her predicament at the centre and exposes the mind and language games being played against her as petty and vindictive. She pushes this advantage home by her line 'Sorry, it upsets me because I'm going deaf and actually, you're talking about my family.' This turns the tables on her adversaries and through apologising for being upset at an attack on her own family's deafness it lands as a stunning blow on the chief antagonist Christopher. He responds with a cowed 'I'm sorry'. Beth and Ruth declare where their sympathies lie by offering phatic, bolstering, supporting talk. In effect, Sylvia has not only stood up for

herself, showing, as one response had it 'confidence and endurance', she has split her enemies and beaten the chief antagonist. Daniel has witnessed this and has been impressed. Billy, who Sylvia might have expected to have championed her, has not been referenced throughout after his opening signing. This sows the seeds for how relationships will develop as the play progresses.

The responses we have seen all did a good job of showing the interplay of characters and in particular the way power shifts and changes in the extract.

Question 12

12 Jez Butterworth: *Jerusalem*

Explore how Butterworth presents Lee in this extract from *Jerusalem*.

You should consider the use of dramatic and stylistic techniques in the extract, its significance within the play and any relevant dramatic or other contexts.

[32]

This text remains a small but stable part of the entry. It produces lively and engaged work. The extract is from near the beginning and the question focus is on Lee. The candidates' grasp of the character was often very impressive. It was helped by the presence in a recent paper of the extract between Lee and Davey from near the end of the text which may have been used by centres as a mock exam. There was certainly evidence of knowledge of that extract in plenty of the responses. There was some welcome theatrical focus in some responses at the start, reminding us that Lee's sudden emergence is unexpected and comedic as the audience would be unaware of his presence sleeping on the couch with its back towards the audience. He calls out 'Mother!' which is a wonderfully exposing thing for a newly awakened teenager to shout out. The jocular fast-paced rhythmic exchanges establish that Ginger is irked by missing the fun that Lee's hangover represents. If Lee was embarrassed by his cry of 'Mother!' it doesn't last longer than the sighting of a 'spliff' which bookends the extract. Bolstered by that he takes the floor with great energy. He can't wait to rub Ginger's face in the fact that he missed 'a classic night'. The paratactic syntax means the allusions and references pour out in a virtuoso piece of speech. Candidates had great fun picking the speech apart, noting the odd concatenation of ideas, images and references. It breaks down into paralinguistic features of being overcome by hilarity. This is often funnier for the one laughing than for an audience, particularly here where Ginger harbours animosity towards Lee and Johnny has appeared cool towards Lee from the start of the extract with his non-committal 'Morning, Lee' rather than 'Good morning, Lee' and his 'What's it look like?'. Here his response to Lee's incapacity through laughter is a dry 'Sorry, I can't help you' – uncharacteristically unreactive and terse for Johnny. When Lee finally gets to the 'punchline' it is Johnny's smashing of the television set at the party that Lee sees as the great joke. He hasn't been paying attention to the mood of Ginger and Johnny, too absorbed in his own self-amusement. He gets a 'No I never' from Johnny, then a 'Bollocks' and his denial is in the face of a pile of smashed television in front of him on stage. We get a sense of why Johnny has been cool towards Lee: he knows that Lee witnessed something that now he wishes to deny, for whatever reason, perhaps his sense that Lee wants to leave.

Ginger's 'Aren't you supposed to be gone?' scarcely disguises his animosity towards Lee who tactlessly describes the party as 'unmissable' knowing that Ginger had missed it. Ginger's line brings a focus onto the great moment in Lee's life: his plan to escape Rooster's Wood and emigrate to Australia. This also may lie behind Johnny's tone towards him as through the play as a whole: Johnny has had a fondness for Lee exemplified in him being chosen to bang Johnny's drum at the end of the play, as noted by several candidates. Many candidates handled the idea of Lee being a 'liminal' character skilfully and

knowledgeably. His plan to leave the Wood distinguishes him from the other characters such as his foil Davey with his 'my ears pop when I leave Wiltshire'. The Butterworth comment to the effect that those characters who want to leave should stay and those who want to stay should leave was referenced by several candidates. Lee's language convergence with the sociolect of others in the Wood is strategic to achieve acceptance rather than a real reflection of his potential. There is a touching moment when Lee tries to prove the authenticity and truth of his plan to emigrate by brandishing the ticket he carries with him. Johnny and Ginger gang up on him to undermine him: 'You'll be back next year' says Johnny cynically. He further persuades them by telling, at rather too great and revealing a length, how he has disposed of his childhood toys and paraphernalia. His speech here is much funnier than the speech about Johnny smashing the television.

It is Lee's guileless honesty that endears him to us and the specificity of items in the list. The timing is perfect too, as candidates noted, particularly Ginger's interjection. His whole childhood goes up in flames but he remains calm in spite of sniping from Johnny. The extract takes a final turn when Lee announces he is fasting. He's fasting because while on Googling for his ticket he 'found a wicked site about the Potawatomes'. This openness to experience and the world, his inquisitiveness and willingness to commit 'I'm purging myself' shows him as a character who is looking out to the world, not hiding from it in Rooster's Wood. All Ginger and Rooster can do in the face of this positive embracing of the world is to mock it.

The final line of the extract hangs in the air as the next scene begins, but it is full of positive energy and a desire for a life outside the comfort zone of Rooster's Wood: 'The journey. What lies ahead...' Lots of the responses to this extract showed real engagement and knowledge. Enthusiasm and enjoyment were very evident too – a good thing to see.

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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 (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

Online courses

Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

Why should you use our online courses?

With these online courses you will:

- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation
- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
- be able to track your progress and achievements through the courses.

How can you access our online courses?

Access courses from [Teach Cambridge](#). Teach Cambridge is our secure teacher website, where you'll find all teacher support for your subject.

If you already have a Teach Cambridge account, you'll find the link to the **Online courses** under the **Assessment** or **Training** tab – hover over **Assessment** or **Training** on the horizontal menu and select **Online courses** from the dropdown.

If you don't have a Teach Cambridge account yet, ask your exams officer to set you up – just send them this [link](#) and ask them to add you as a Teacher.

Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

Which courses are available?

We recommend all teachers complete the module on Online courses – NEA for their subject. These courses provide subject-specific information about course content; how to prepare for planning, marking and submitting; and support with understanding the marking criteria.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

How can you get support and feedback?

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the online courses and make them more useful and relevant for you. You can share your views by completing the evaluation form at the end of each course.

Tell us what you think

Your feedback plays an important role in how we develop, market, support and resource qualifications now and into the future. We want you and your students to enjoy and get the best out of our qualifications and resources, but to do that we need your honest opinions to tell us whether we're on the right track or not.

You can email your thoughts to resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk or visit our [feedback page](#) to learn more about how you can help us improve our resources.



Designing and testing in [collaboration with you](#) and your students



Helping young people develop an [ethical view of the world](#)



Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are [part of everything we do](#)

Contact the team at:

☎ 01223 553998

🖥 ocr.org.uk

To stay up to date with all the relevant news about our qualifications, register for email updates at ocr.org.uk/updates

Visit our Online Support Centre at support.ocr.org.uk



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