

Examiners' report

AS LEVEL

ENGLISH LITERATURE

**OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE
in English Literature**

H072

For first teaching in 2015

H072/01 Summer 2025 series

Contents

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

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 exam paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 1 series overview

H072/01 (Shakespeare and poetry pre-1900) is one of two examination components for OCR's AS Level in English Literature. The component comprises two sections.

Section 1 requires the candidate to answer one question from a choice of six Shakespeare plays. Each question has an either/or choice and requires the candidate to discuss a specific topic, taking into account a prompt quotation.

Section 2 requires the candidate to answer one question from a choice of five pre-1900 poets. The question directs the candidate towards a specific poem (or an extract from a longer poem) which is the principal focus of the question. Each question comprises a single poem or extract with no choice offered. The candidate is required to analyse the poem/extract closely and to make links between the set poem and other poems by the given poet or, if it is an extract, to the rest of the poem.

Section 1 assesses the four assessment objectives AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO5. Section 2 assesses the four assessment objectives AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4.

Assessment for learning



1. Candidates should be mindful that AO2 is the dominant assessment objective in both sections of the paper, and it is important for candidates to consider linguistic and/or dramatic effects in their responses. It is also useful to remember that AO3 is the least-weighted assessment objective in both sections. References to social, historical and biographical context are rewarded only where they genuinely contribute to the interpretations of the text being debated.
2. As in previous series, it was always helpful to observe candidates moving beyond the trend merely to 'feature spot' in responses. Responses which considered the *effects* of linguistic/technical devices on the meaning of a text were generally more successful. With recent trends in the teaching of English (both Language and Literature) at GCSE now having an impact on work produced by candidates at AS Level, it was interesting to note how both 'knowledge'-driven responses and formulaic approaches to the structure of responses are having an impact on work produced at higher levels. While such approaches will never prevent a candidate from responding well to the questions and relevant AOs on the AS paper, it is also worth remembering that English in Years 12 & 13 continues to be a creative subject which requires some independence of thought and application from candidates. Fixed structures and rigid approaches are never expected and, indeed, candidates are likely to be more successful at AS if they are able to move beyond these Key Stage 4 features of the subject.
3. It is worth candidates remembering that focused, succinct responses can be just as effective (or more so) than extremely lengthy responses. Candidates are not expected to write as much as they can in the time available. 'Think more; write less' continues to serve as a good maxim for the approach expected in this unit.

The fundamental principle of the marking is holistic: each response is given a mark out of 30. This reflects how the response has met the Level criteria, as set out in the mark scheme.

In both sections, AO1 and AO2 are more heavily weighted. To do well on this paper, candidates need to have sufficiently close familiarity with their texts to:

- structure an argument which is genuinely responsive to the question
- develop their argument through detailed textual reference and discussion of effects.

For Section 1, knowledge of productions and specific references to critical views and perspectives will help candidates to achieve with respect to AO5, but these ideas should complement (and not be a substitute for) close familiarity with the written text. Relevant discussion of dramatic effects or of actors' delivery of lines within a particular production are also recognised as achievement with respect to AO5. Relevant discussion of Shakespeare's construction of dramatic tension, or his use of stagecraft, are recognised as achievement with respect to AO2.

For Section 2, responsiveness to the question necessitates a focus on the given extract. Sound comprehension of (and some range across) the extract is necessary for mid-level achievement. Candidates must know the rest of the poem (or the other set poems) well enough to select cross references and to make connections apposite to the question. However, it is expected that most of the discussion of effects will use quotations from the extract itself. A lack of adequate focus on the extract is regarded as a partial attempt at the question.

Once again, examiners reported that it was a pleasure to mark so many thoughtful, impressive and original responses. It was again encouraging for many to conclude that the core skills of English Literature are again being nurtured and refined (by Centres and candidates) and the AS qualification continues to serve a valuable purpose in its useful position between the GCSE and the full A Level. Some AS Component 1 examiners commented on the fact that some candidates also seemed to have been prepared to respond to questions on the same texts in Component H472/01, and it is important to remember that the distribution of assessment objectives is sometimes different on the two papers. On the whole, the approach by candidates to the practicalities of timing in the exam appears to have improved in the current series.

The paper seemed to be very well received by candidates and centres. As always, candidates were most successful when they responded to the specific questions set, and when they considered the weighting of the relevant assessment objectives. Centres would again be advised to remember that certain conventions do apply when expressing ideas about literary texts in an examination context. Responses were often focused and impressive, and it was good to note that candidates working at this level are often capable of producing highly effective responses. As mentioned above, the influence of the study of English (both Language and Literature) at GCSE was frequently perceived in responses, and this sometimes had notably positive effects. At times, although, a 'knowledge-intensive' approach or an obsession with obscure technical terminology (for its own sake) did not always aid candidates. We reiterate that the study of English Literature at AS/A Level is, in many respects, a creative exercise which also requires an element of personal response (which can often be recognised in AO5). Once again in the current series, developments in the original qualities of candidates' responses have continued to increase markedly. As long as this originality contributes to responses to the specific questions set, then candidates should not be afraid of adopting this approach.

Quite a large number of scripts were typed in the current series. Examiners did again witness a small number of causes for concern in aspects of the presentation of some responses (both typed and handwritten). Handwriting and other skills of presentation are becoming a significant problem in some scripts. It is again worth reminding candidates that an assessment of this kind does invite a formally

structured set of responses. With typed work, it was good to note that candidates are now more aware that slips and errors in unchecked work could well affect the final quality of the response.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• made appropriate question choices • remembered to bear in mind the relevant assessment objectives for each question (remembering that AO2 is dominant) • selected and convincingly discussed effects of language, form and structure • demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of their texts, and of their critical and contextual circumstances (where relevant) • wrote essays with clear, well-structured arguments (which used quotation to good effect) • wrote accurately and legibly • made it clear which questions they were answering • answered the specific requirements of their chosen questions • wrote to an appropriate length (neither a fragment or an excessive amount) • remembered that conventions for writing about literary texts in an examination context do exist.	• focused their response on the incorrect assessment objectives (sometimes not taking into account the dominance of AO2) • used technical terms for their own sake • used few relevant quotations, perhaps because of insufficient textual knowledge • focused on textual events, sometimes drifting into narrative recall, and often without an appropriately literary tone • wrote very short or very long responses • wrote illegibly or inaccurately, or answered in note form • did not answer the questions chosen, or 'twisted' responses away from the questions set to answer on a different topic • wrote generally rather than answering the specific question • responded partially to questions, sometimes deploying irrelevant pre-prepared material • wrote with little sense of direction or development • did not indicate on the script the numbers of the questions chosen.

Section 1 overview

In the current series *Hamlet* was the most popular text, with *The Tempest* coming a close second. *Measure for Measure*, *Richard III* and *Twelfth Night* were all fairly popular. Hardly anything was seen on *Coriolanus*.

Candidates who did well in Section 1 generally: discussed in detail a number of moments in the play which were highly relevant to their selected question; quoted appropriately and pertinently from the play; selected quotations which developed their argument and interpretation in response to the question; recognised that there were multiple key words in each question, and devoted time and space to the consideration of each of these; used the question to prompt a debate, considering more than one side of the given proposition; discussed the play in ways which were genuinely informed by different interpretations; and referred selectively to aspects of historical context in order to enrich their interpretation of textual detail.

Candidates who did less well in Section 1 generally: referred to parts of the play which were not entirely relevant to their selected question; made little use of relevant quotations (or attempted to fabricate these); discussed characters' traits and actions without attempting to analyse language, structure or form; focused on one key word in the question at the expense of others, rather than answering the entire question set; wrote as if only one interpretation of the play were possible, generally presenting their opinions about characters as facts; used aspects of the play to make sweeping assertions about contextual aspects.

Question 1 (a)

1 *Coriolanus*

Either

(a) 'A play in which all the characters put themselves first.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the play *Coriolanus*?

[30]

This text was not a popular choice. Some of the characters obviously put their own interests first: the Tribunes, Tullus Aufidius, Volumnia, Titus Lartius, Cominius. The crowd, as always in Shakespeare, is viewed as a cloud of shifting self-interests, easily controlled by professional oratory. Menenius arguably sees beyond his own interests, but he has a substantial ego. Coriolanus' own self-interests are harder to discern, and there is the possibility of viewing him from a number of different perspectives.

Question 1 (b)

(b) 'Menenius is generally right about things.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the role of Menenius Agrippa in the play *Coriolanus*? [30]

This text was not a popular choice. Menenius is an accomplished observer: witty, entertaining, and able to amuse the people as easily as the senators. Yet he rejoices that he has always 'loved the people'; which means he gets on with them: he thinks they are 'passing cowardly' and 'lack discretion.' This makes him an influential figure. He is pragmatic and perceptive about Coriolanus. He is a partial, if gifted, guide to the audience throughout the play. As a political commentator he ends the play disappointed, but not disgraced.

Question 2 (a)

2 *Hamlet*

Either

(a) 'In the play *Hamlet* retaliation does more harm than good.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the play *Hamlet*? [30]

This was a very popular question. Some candidates pointed out that the entire first act is devoted to private and public confirmation that Claudius murdered his brother, but when Act 2 arrives Hamlet's conspiracy to retaliate by killing the King does not appear to have advanced at all. The most famous soliloquy in the play suggests it might be better to kill oneself, not Claudius. Many candidates argued that the retaliation theme strengthens when Laertes returns as would-be revenger of his father and sister, with Hamlet as his intended victim. Some pointed out that the literary origins of *Hamlet* lie in the revenge play of the 1590s, particularly Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's own *Titus Andronicus*. Eventually Hamlet unexpectedly 'sweeps to his revenge' having taken brutal toll on the efforts of his old school-friends, on Claudius' behalf. Answers to questions of motive never come easily in *Hamlet*, so a range of responses was offered, with some candidates commending the 'wild justice' of getting one's own back, and others condemning it as a primitive, self-defeating, self-perpetuating response.

Question 2 (b)

(b) 'Ophelia is drawn into a corrupt world through no fault of her own.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the role of Ophelia in the play *Hamlet*?

[30]

This was a very popular question. Candidates suggested that the part of Ophelia is intriguing but sketchy. Many readings of her character and situation were offered. The most obvious point was that she becomes one of the play's victims, innocent or partly innocent. Her madness suggested depths of feeling and confusion about her sexuality, her involvement in and fear of relationships; her drowning suggested to many a ritual of watery purification, like baptism. Her gender suggested she will become a target for manipulation at the corrupt Danish Court, and also for members of her own family. Much depended on how candidates viewed the efforts of the ageing spymaster Polonius to engage his daughter in his schemes. How much does Ophelia know of her father's machinations? How much does she deserve or understand the double-entendre of the nunnery scene, or Hamlet's gross allusion to her 'country matters'? Is she a victim of a callous parent's machinations - or of Hamlet's selfish or inconclusive lovemaking? Ophelia was often seen by candidates as a victim of all that is 'out of joint' at the Danish Court, from its gender politics to its casual compromise of personal privacy.

Exemplar 1

2	b	As a character, Ophelia is used and manipulated by many individuals that are believed to be above her within society's social ladder. These individuals include Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes (her brother) as well as Gertrude (another female oppressed by men). Ophelia is used as a pawn for her father's spying back and his plan to capture Hamlet falling for Ophelia. This plan is constructed and put into action by Polonius, Gertrude and Claudius. The plan backfires as Hamlet is aware he is being watched. This places Ophelia in a position of danger and emphasises how all characters in Hamlet use Ophelia to their own advantage sexually and emotionally. Ophelia is particularly used within the spying and espionage culture of the play. the Ophelia has been related to Elizabeth I, the Queen of Spies, by many critics. During the Elizabethan era, espionage was very popular and it can be identified as a device within Shakespeare's play that is used a lot. One screen adaptation that played heavily on the theme of espionage is the 2009 David Tennant film. Within the film many scenes are edited to appear as CCTV footage emphasising the heavy use of
2	b	espionage throughout the play.

This section from a Level 4 response to Question 2 (b) illustrates a competent but rather straightforward approach to linguistic/dramatic analysis (AO2) and to the expression of ideas (AO1).

Question 3 (a)

3 *Measure for Measure*

Either

(a) 'A kind of debate between law and liberty.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of *Measure for Measure*?

[30]

This was a fairly popular choice. The play was sometimes held by candidates to expound the gospel passage indicated in the title, Matthew 7:2, 'For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.' 'Judgment' has 'slept' in Vienna, allowing brothels to spring up in the suburbs, without the necessary curbs statutes should provide. Angelo, whose blood is very 'snow-broth' and who seems a model of detachment, tries to restore the balance with brutal new laws, putting down the bawdy houses but also making sex outside marriage a capital crime. The puritanical lawmaker, Angelo, turns out to be corrupt and scored with sexual guilt, while the Church is represented by a novice nun and a Duke somewhat erratically impersonating a Friar. It was pointed out by some candidates that there are a number of set-piece speeches in the play that might have been written for debating: Isabella's attack on masculine temerity in her confrontation with Angelo; the Friar's extended advice to be absolute for death; Claudio's horror of the tomb and eternity. Most candidates agreed that Angelo's harsh laws need to be countermanded, but some did not like the libertarianism of the Duke-Friar when he goes so far as to claim Isabella as his bride in the final scene.

Question 3 (b)

(b) 'The only characters who deserve our sympathy are Claudio and Lucio.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the roles of Claudio and Lucio in *Measure for Measure*?

[30]

There were some responses to this question. These two figures were often shown by candidates to be the characters who most obviously stand on the side of life and against harsh justice: Claudio because he is a young man in love threatened with death; Lucio because he seems to have built a heroic career as a gentleman of leisure and pleasure. Claudio, threatened by draconian new laws against fornication, as good as married in English Law, was often presented to seem wholly deserving of our sympathy, especially when his life is weighed in the balance with his sister's pure idealism: 'More than our brother is our chastity.' Lucio proved harder to like, as promiscuous, getter of bastards and wonderfully inventive liar, especially in his gratuitous and unprofitable calumny of the Duke, whom he claims is the 'old fantastical Duke of dark corners.' Some candidates argued that, for all her dangerous ideals, Isabella is an energetic, virtuous and resourceful figure, especially in her dealings with Angelo. Some put in a good word for Pompey, and even Barnardine. It was less likely that candidates found the Duke's bizarre behaviour sympathetic, but some did, especially if he is read as a Godlike figure.

Question 4 (a)

4 *Richard III*

Either

(a) 'A tragedy with plenty of laughs.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the play *Richard III*?

[30]

This was a fairly popular choice. Some candidates pointed out that there have been a few chilling productions of the play which eschewed humour, such as Simon Russell Beale at Stratford in 1993, but most Richards induct us - with grim jollity - into the mysteries of usurpation, astonished that imbeciles flatter him or find him handsome, or that women succumb to his fawning wiles. The death of Clarence has a risible side, not just the unlikely means of execution, but also the way one of the murderers inconveniently ties himself up in conscientious knots. There are plenty of 'witty' contributions from Buckingham too, explaining how difficult it is to set a crowd alight. In the fourth act Richard's heartlessness becomes quite grisly, as when Richard's mother, whom he attempts to silence with a military band, demands he 'hear her a word/For I shall never speak to thee again.' In the final scenes Richard first loses control of events and becomes cantankerous and remorseful, even before the moral atmosphere is stacked so heavily against comedy at Bosworth. Olivier's performance remains the standard for many candidates: brutal, watchful, threateningly camp.

Question 4 (b)

(b) 'Richard's disability is the key to his character and behaviour.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the role of Richard in the play *Richard III*?

[30]

This was a fairly popular choice. Candidates pointed out that Richard begins the play advertising the deformity that keeps him from enjoying the excesses of his brother's Court. He claims to be more suited to subterfuge and stratagem, although the sunny fortunes of the House of York do give him space, despite his deformity, to 'court an amorous looking glass'. The choric characters never miss an opportunity to point out Richard's extraordinary appearance: he was born with teeth, could gnaw a crust at two hours old, resembles a toad or bottled spider, with a 'stone-hard' heart. There is plenty of evidence of Richard's martial prowess, despite now proven curvature of the spine, but Shakespeare has him chopped down in a single scene, a demonic king without a horse, too ugly and desperate to contend with saintly Richmond. Some candidates alluded to productions of the play, such as that featuring David Troughton or (long ago) Marius Goring, where Richard's disability is seen as a psychological explanation for his needy, self-advertising cruelty. Most candidates saw Richard as the product of Tudor animosity and propaganda, although an excellently contorted villainous part. Richard is not above using his own appearance for political ends, as when he suddenly alleges that Hastings' consort Jane Shore has cursed his arm and caused it to wither.

Question 5 (a)

5 *The Tempest*

Either

(a) 'The play suggests that everyone needs forgiveness.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of *The Tempest*?

[30]

This was a fairly popular question. Most candidates agreed that Christian forgiveness is a keynote of the play, although its value needs to be learned by nearly everyone except Gonzalo, including Prospero himself. Many candidates viewed as a turning point in the action Ariel persuading his master to tear up his plans for revenge, as the 'rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance.' Some candidates took the view that Caliban, in particular, needs understanding as much as forgiveness, and that the sordid ambition and drunkenness of Stephano owes as much to the class system as to natural vice. Others offered W.H. Auden's reading of the play's closure, arguing that Sebastian doesn't seem to understand the forgiveness offered him, and that Antonio passively but pointedly resists it. Only Alonso, of the three men of sin confronted by the Harpy, is suitably contrite and takes Ariel's offer of a free life ensuing. Some candidates quoted alternative readings of the play as an early exercise in colonisation, where Prospero is shown to use his powers less to civilise and educate than to exploit and control. The final moment, where Prospero, taking on the humility of an actor, begs forgiveness of the audience, was seen as significant by many candidates.

Question 5 (b)

(b) 'As a trio Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo carry real menace.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the roles of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo in *The Tempest*?

[30]

This was a popular question. The conspiracy scenes arguably work better on stage than when read, and the sense of a murderous but somewhat ineffectual conspiracy brewing is very clear, partly because Caliban has shifted allegiance to Stephano and his wondrous bottle, trusting him in everything, partly because Caliban is full of hints as to how to perform the slaughter of his former master. This is clearly an opportunity Caliban has long dreamed of. He has staked out his quarry and his weaknesses, and means to use the animosity of the sailors to hit them hard. The problem is not, however, with Caliban, who dreams of murder and is capable of rape, but with his companions, a timid jester and a drunken sot, who are easily (and comically) deceived and reproved by Ariel, and are deceived by the swirling, poetic noises of the isle, which Caliban finds a source of consolation rather than menace. Many candidates explained how significant the counter-conspiracy of the three underlings is in establishing the shape of the play, and how the antimasque of the hunting dogs complements the elegant masque of the nuptial goddesses, but few felt that these scenes have the menace of Antonio's conspiracy, at least his version of twelve years before.

Question 6 (a)

6 *Twelfth Night*

Either

(a) 'A play that focuses more on the pains than the pleasures of love.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of *Twelfth Night*?

[30]

This was a fairly popular question. Candidates were able to cover a great deal of material. Orsino begins the play surfeiting on the sweets of love, obsessively directing his pleasures and pains towards Olivia (who is too distracted by some combination of grief or ego or torpor to respond other than negatively). The opening of the play seems to concern itself, therefore, more with the pangs of love than its pleasures. Feste sings of the joys of youth (which will not endure), the ubiquity of death, and (later) the vicissitudes (the wind and the rain) that plague us every day. Orsino and Viola are the first to challenge this view of love in the curious scene where he seems to fall in love with Cesario's (non-existent) sister through her disguise. Even then, however, the pain of love, death by unrequited longing, is to the fore. It takes several more scenes for Orsino to cleave to his cross-dressed mistress in a public space (after threatening to kill her) and for Olivia, after having been confusingly roused by a spontaneous attraction for Sebastian's sister, to settle for Sebastian himself as a force of nature. Only then is a comic ending celebrating the pleasures of love assured (as candidates were keen to point out). This is a play in which love finds a way to grant what is needed, not what the lovers think they want. It is also a play that leaves peripheral figures with the pain of ruined hopes: Andrew Aguecheek mourning his having been 'adored once', Malvolio smoking with the ruin of his marital ambitions, and frustrated Antonio, who set his heart on the inconstancy of (male) youth.

Question 6 (b)

(b) 'Olivia is frequently surprised at the depth of her own feelings.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the role of Olivia in *Twelfth Night*?

[30]

Some responses to this question were seen. At the beginning of the play Olivia is smothered by feelings for her dead brother, finding it difficult to respond to the joshing of Feste or to engage in his rivalry with Malvolio. Her early scenes are largely reclusive, her only energy is expending in batting away the charms of Orsino. Her awakening comes in 2:4, where Cesario's embassy awakens personal pride in her appearance and a self-conscious admission of consuming love ('Even so quickly may one catch the plague'). Cesario's rather effusive effort to train Echo to speak her name is taken quite seriously by Olivia, who is at once transported to the retreats of pastoral love. Malvolio's bitter passion drifts by her without being fully noticed, although she remains preoccupied with her own status, viewing him as beneath her. Sebastian's appearance, however, finds her unstinting in her commitment to a fresh world of love, and determined to legitimise her passion by marriage. Her authority drives the last moments of the play, conciliating Sir Toby and the lighter people, and entreating Malvolio to a peace, for he 'hath been notoriously abused.' There were suggestions that Olivia seems to grow progressively in stature and feeling as the play unfolds, finishing as a model lover and an expert mistress of ceremonies. Some candidates commented on the fact that in a famous Globe production Mark Rylance was able to control much of the play from the role of Olivia.

Section 2 overview

Christina Rossetti was again by far the most popular poet in this section. Chaucer, *Paradise Lost* and Coleridge were also popular. Tennyson was the least popular choice, and only a few responses on *Maud* were seen in this series.

Candidates who did well in Section 2 generally: devoted between two-thirds and three-quarters of their response to the set extract; referred to details outside the extract only when they were relevant to their argument; structured their response around examples of language, imagery and verse form which were relevant to, and which generated different lines of interpretation in response to, the question; and discussed effects in ways which built on their study of key themes and concerns in the set text as whole.

Candidates who did less well in Section 2 generally: used only a small number of quotations from the extract, focusing more of their response on other poems (or parts of the poem); referred to other poems which were at best partially relevant to the question; seemed to work their way line-by-line through the extract, without constructing an argument in response to the question; attempted to discuss the effects of language features in ways which suggested only partial comprehension of the text; made entirely generalised references to linguistic techniques and effects, without making convincing connections between form and meaning; and deployed biographical knowledge of the poet (and other contextual material) without great relevance to analysis of the extract.

Question 7

7 Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*

Discuss Chaucer's presentation of the ways in which Januarie tries to show that old men should choose young wives.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find the extract characteristic of *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*. [30]

This was a popular question. This is a continuation of Januarie's argument that marriage is the best place for aged sensualists like himself, following a catalogue of authorities to this effect. The narrative introduction to the passage is brusque and free from irony, but when Januarie starts speaking his views are so self-interested and misogynistic that irony is not needed. Candidates were often quick to point this out. Januarie wants all his counsellors and friends to look out for a young wife for him, taking their model from the animal kingdom, where old pike (like himself) are top of the food-chain, and the best food is fresh veal, female, and under thirty years of age. He also makes clear he dislikes craft in a wife, especially one who has gone about the world and attended many schools. He is himself crafty enough to argue that an old wife would force him to commit adultery. This passage includes the notorious crux of 'Wade's boat', which has defied explication by Chaucer scholars for centuries: examiners were sympathetic to those who steered round it. Candidates sometimes commented on the fact that the couplets often bring out Januarie's hectoring emphases and their underpinning lechery.

Question 8

8 John Milton: *Paradise Lost*, Books 9 & 10

Discuss Milton's presentation of the ways in which Satan and Sin celebrate the joining of Heaven and Hell in this extract.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find the extract characteristic of *Paradise Lost*, Books 9 & 10. **[30]**

This was a popular question. This is the triumphal meeting between Satan, Sin (who says a great deal) and Death (who is a silent supporting presence). The main purpose of their meeting is to inspect the bridge that after the Fall joins Heaven to Earth. Sin's speech offers Satan a series of flattering reminders of what he has accomplished, and how nearly related to him she is, so that they function as a kind of mystic, composite being. The bridge is first described as 'stupendous', then, after Sin has discussed its purpose, more darkly as 'portentous.' Sin is keen to remind Satan that the bridge, although it was the work of Death, is of his doing, and confirms the significance of this unholy parody Trinity: Sin, the Devil her consort and their dark son, Death. There is a great deal of play with titles. God is reduced by Sin to 'our foil in Heav'n', while Satan acquires the title 'Prince of Darkness' and describes himself as 'Antagonist of Heaven's Almighty King.' Everyone is delighted with the unification of Hell with Heaven and Earth by what amounts to infernal invasion, and Satan's rhetoric gladly celebrates 'one realm, one continent of easy thoroughfare. Sin suggests Satan now may have a chance to 'try thee now more dangerous to his throne.' Satan does not deny this possibility, and rhetorical celebrations of the Fall continue. Candidates were quick to pick up on many of these references and ideas.

Question 9

9 Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Selected Poems*

Discuss Coleridge's view of constancy in '*Constancy to an Ideal Object*'.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find the poem characteristic of Coleridge's work in your selection. **[30]**

This was a fairly popular question. In this late poem Coleridge takes long views of human life. His view of 'the porch of Death' in this poem is particularly striking, as if 'Hope and Despair' meet in our last hours like strangers bumping into one another, sheltering from a storm. He concludes that the quaintly named 'fairy people' of the 'future day' will be powerless to save us then, and that having kept 'Constant to an Ideal Object' won't help us much either. So what is the value of Constancy at all? After some speculative quatrains the poet warms to his task and settles into heroic couplets for a description of the domestic bliss he has sought out all his life. He covets 'a home, an English home, and thee!' As many candidates were quick to mention, he is recalling his lost beloved, Sara Hutchinson. The second verse paragraph concludes with little reminiscences of a number of previous poems: the 'peacefullest cot' of 'Frost at Midnight' and the cottage of 'The Aeolian Harp'. The image of an impotent Helmsman 'on an ocean waste and wide' recalls 'The Ancient Mariner.' The strongest reminiscence is of the beautiful futility of nature and Coleridge's desperate love for Sara in 'Dejection'. These poems were all mentioned by candidates in responses. The poem is completed and unified by the astonishing Romantic image of the Spectre of the Brocken with which it concludes, the illusion that we see our own Double as a huge shadow in the mist, glowing like a saint. 'Constancy', as some candidates suggested, is ultimately a quest to come to terms with the fascinating 'other' that is oneself.

Question 10

10 Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Maud*

Discuss Tennyson's presentation of the narrator's feelings about Maud in this extract.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find the extract characteristic of *Maud*. **[30]**

This was not a popular question. The opening stanza suggests that the *Maud* persona is looking for philosophic detachment despite the mindless buzzing of the insects that surround him, but the fourteeners (never a smooth rhythm) heave and pitch, suggesting that his insights will be troubled and not entirely reliable. Maud, the 'milkwhite faun', is better company than the screaming geese of the first section, but there is, as usual (and as suggested by candidates) something chilly about her, possibly reflected in the cold marble image of her mother. The persona keeps his distance from her with his usual complaint, that she has been coddled. With Section V the metre changes to a swinging march. Now Maud seems to be singing in an untroubled world of outdoor freshness. The only difficulty is that it is a 'martial song like a trumpet's call' and the onset of The Crimean War has been much in the mind of the poem (and indeed was mentioned by many candidates). Maud's bell-like voice and gem-like feet seem to reprove the speaker, possibly urging him to go out to Russia and fight. The final stanza sees the persona fall, in his mind's eye, before his beloved on the glowing meadow grass. He is determined to keep the martial voice and Maud separate, distinguishing between them with troubling precision: 'Not her, not her, but a voice.' The final section takes us away from the sunshine and military ardour, and into the 'wannish glare' of a stormy morning. The mood of the persona has changed again.

Question 11

11 Christina Rossetti: *Selected Poems*

Discuss Christina Rossetti's presentation of desire in '*Soeur Louise de la Miséricorde*'.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find the poem characteristic of Rossetti's work in your selection. **[30]**

This was a very popular question. This is a monologue by the first mistress of Louis XIV of France, in the King's favour from 1661 to 1667, created Duchess of La Valliere. After bearing the King a son, she gradually subtracted herself from the French Court - entering a Carmelite Convent at the age of just 30 and taking the name Louise, Sister of Mercy. She lived to be 64, spending more than half her life in the convent. This biographical context was very useful, but was not expected on every good script. Many candidates were able to offer at least an outline of the information. Rossetti's poem is in pentameter, combining the tugging forward movement of the couplet with the quatrain's tendency to stasis, as the Sister continues to meditate on her 'vain desire.' The last line of the stanza is supernumerary, a refrain, a reminder of the familiar verse from *Ecclesiastes* (again mentioned by many candidates) but in this case finding the consuming 'vanity' of life to be human desire. The arduousness of the process of forgetting desire is signalled by the insistent repetition of key words and phrases (a familiar technique of Rossetti's and something again mentioned in many responses) and, particularly by the use of internal rhyme, which seems to trap the process of forgetting among fragments of memory. Some of the imagery of a soul stuck in slippery mud seems to come from the Psalms; this is incongruously blended with memories of a garden plot, which distant setting also supplies the 'rose of life', now dried to prickles. This is one of the more ascetic poems in the selection, with potent self-reproof as in 'Good Friday' and a sense of the need for vigilance and the need to bear disappointment as in 'Shut Out'; the sense of the resilience of desire reminds us of the combats of the flesh in 'Goblin Market'. These poems were frequently mentioned in candidates' responses.

Exemplar 2

northern mantras that desiring heavenly
 love is the best desire for one to
 have. This is elucidated in their
 course through the lexical cluster
 'pondered', 'pore', 'decumbent', creating a
 semantic field of death and
 hopelessness, signifying northern's
~~struggles~~ scrutiny regarding the
 pursuit of earthly love. Moreover,
 in uphill, northern implies that
 desiring heavenly love means desiring
 the purest form of love, unconditional love.
 This is portrayed through the noun
 'inn', conveying warmth and comfort,
 reflecting on how the human desire to
 be loved can only be fulfilled by God.
 Furthermore, the speaker's desire for
 a 'bed', symbol of comfort and
 solace, is met by the monogamous,
 life-affirming phrase 'yea, bedd
 for an who were'. The archaic
 response 'yea' mirrors the
 immortality of God's love, and

		actively illustrated how good it generous
		and merciful, nurturing all desires
		and providing eternal love. Furthermore,
		in 'A Birthday', the imagery of
		water, evident in the nouns 'shell',
		'puddles' 'sea', mirror cleansing
		and rejuvenation. This highlights how
		whilst desiring earthly love brings
		pain, suffering and death, desiring
		heavenly love brings about healing,
		and life. Rossetti's use of imperatives
		in 'A Birthday' ('ride it, hang it,
		curve it'), also indicate that
		heavenly love brings power and
		liberation, a stark contrast to the
		'dear-bred' speaker is confined to
		in secret house, symbolizing her
		role as a prisoner, under the shadows
		of the desire, of the earthly love , the desire of
		earthly love.

This section from a Level 6 response to Question 11 demonstrates an excellent approach to linguistic analysis (AO2) and helpful reference to another poem (AO4).

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