Principal examiner reports for teachers

Principal examiner reports for teachers summarise what candidates did well and what candidates needed to improve for this examination series only.

This report is to be used in conjunction with the question paper and mark scheme.

For guidance on teaching and learning we provide resources for many of our syllabuses.

Resource	Where to find it
Grade descriptions – Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Syllabus and specimen materials
Schemes of work – Schemes of work are designed to support you in your teaching and lesson planning.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Lesson planning – Guidance on how to plan a lesson.	Lesson planning
Resource plus – There may be additional resources such as teaching packs containing lesson plans, resources and worksheets and videos for aspects of your syllabus.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Teaching tools	Teaching Tools
Exemplar candidate responses	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Learner guide – A guide for students to help them understand what the course involves.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Community forums – Do you have a question or something to share? Our online forums are great way to keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community.	Community forum on the school support hub
Access to scripts for this series.	Access to scripts service
Results analysis is available for some syllabuses.	Results analysis
Test maker is available for some subjects.	Test maker

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/12
Drama and Poetry

Key messages

What candidates did well

- The majority of candidates showed evidence of appropriate preparation in selecting relevant material with which to address the given tasks and often had at least a straightforward knowledge of their two texts.
- The quality of the expression was generally appropriate to the task, with some competent examples of essay writing seen.
- Some candidates integrated references to language, rhythm and imagery into an overall interpretation, leading to more relevant points and a more structured approach.

What candidates needed to improve

- When discussing texts, candidates should show more understanding of the effects of dramatic devices and ideas of 'presentation'.
- Candidates need to be aware of the playwright's choices regarding stagecraft when discussing the plays, remembering that an audience would be present during a performance and dramatic devices are designed to produce particular dramatic effects, often communicated through careful stage directions.
- Incorporating a more secure contextual knowledge into relevant sections of essays would help candidates develop a clearer structure for argument and analysis. Some question passages in the drama section were treated more as 'stand-alone' or 'unseen' texts with little understanding of the characters' circumstances at that particular point in the text.
- Candidates should be wary of 'feature spotting' – identifying but not specifically analysing the effects of literary devices such as imagery, enjambment, caesura and personification.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Question 1

(a) There were too few responses to the **(a)** question on this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Those who recognised the extract as part of audience's first glimpse of the couple did well.
- Candidates showed some sound understanding of the 'difficult' and 'messy' relationship between Martha and George, with the cut and thrust of their dialogue, partly amicable and partly hostile, often noted.
- Numerous key themes addressed included alcohol, Martha's desire for young men, Martha's father's pressurising influence upon the marriage and George's 'weaknesses'. Some responses further examined the negative effects of 'external influences', exploring the foreshadowing of Nick's effect upon the relationship, linking such dramatic methods to Albee's 'reveal' and the resulting conflict.
- One candidate noted that despite Martha and George's 'argumentative nature' demonstrated through how they 'constantly interrupt(ed) each other', a more sensitive side to Martha's character was revealed as she was at times 'genuinely hurt'. Responses noted the 'unconventional' nature of the relationship, with one candidate adding that 'Albee undermines traditional gender norms and showcases how marriages can be complex and diverse'.

Limited responses

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- The relationship between Nick and the milder Honey might have provided some interesting contrasts.
- Perhaps the dramatic device of their 'child' could have been explored here.
- Overall, comments on dialogue, stage directions and setting needed development.
- More consideration needed of Albee's use of language with greater acknowledgement of the audience's response.

Question 2

(a) There were too few responses to the **(a)** question on this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- The relationship between Rosa and Sophia was summarised as maternal, friendly and caring.
- There was some awareness of stage action, for example the behaviour of Mavis and hints of what might become of Rosa, and the closing sequence of Rosa and Epf.
- Relevant discussion points included: Sophia's reactions to the jewellery, her attitude to Rosa, the relationship with Epf and the relaxed tone of the extract.

Limited responses

- A more secure grasp of knowledge such as the context of Old Mack and the robbery was needed.
- More understanding of who the characters actually are might have given a more comprehensive response.
- A more comprehensive approach might have focused more on John's use of language although some did explore the meanings behind the use of 'Mrs Adams'.

Question 3

(a) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Overall, knowledge and understanding of the play was sound and candidates were able to select relevant material to address the question.
- Candidates demonstrated some appreciation of contextual factors and contemporary attitudes towards magic in general.
- Candidates focused on Prospero as a character and what happened to him (and Miranda). Sycorax was also mentioned by a few.
- Magic was often viewed by candidates as a means of controlling Caliban and Ariel.
- Demonstrated a good awareness of stagecraft, with one particularly interesting response discussing Shakespeare's use of the masque and island setting as a microcosm to a stage.
- Recognised the role of symbolism in relation to magic in the play, one candidate discussed the link between Prospero renouncing his magic and the restoration of natural order, remarking how Shakespeare was 'directing the play like a moral experiment'.
- Magic was often seen as a means of revenge, the cause of Prospero's problems and the solution to them, with more developed responses exploring his 'melodramatic' breaking of his staff and 'drowning his book'.
- One candidate noted how Ariel's magic was 'natural', describing it as having 'immense beauty and no corruption' demonstrating perceptive use of contextual knowledge by characterising the island as 'a 'New World' the European explorers yearned for during the Age of Exploration'. This idea was further developed as they compared it to the 'attained' magic of Prospero – 'one which instead oppresses the natural and pure'.
- Candidates who underpinned interesting ideas with detailed references to the text did well.

Limited responses

- Favoured a broader structural approach; sometimes at the expense of analysing dramatic effects in depth.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Comedy was viewed as slapstick, physical, verbal, ironic and situational (often with Prospero and Ariel as watchers).
- Considered the behaviour of Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban sneaking about the stage, overreacting to the clothes and being are chased out. One candidate stated that they

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appeared to be 'literally drunk on power', adding that it seemed to be 'a powerful yet humorous critique on politics' comparing it to the more serious and 'strategic' plot to murder Alonso.
- Another response showed some understanding of other sources of comedy within the scene such as the portrayal of Trinculo as being 'comedically ill-witted while still wanting relevance within the conversation'.
- Some recognition of the irony behind Caliban's superior behaviour towards the others and his status as a prisoner upon the island.
- Maintained their focus on the question, showing a general appreciation of the comic nature of the extract.

Limited responses
- Dramatic methods such as language and action were partly explored, with few candidates aware of the possibility for physical comedy as Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban's behaviour.
- Some subtleties were sometimes missed, such as Stephano's bawdy pun regarding the phrase 'under the line'.
- Concentrated only on the first half of the extract.

Question 4

(a) There were too few responses to the **(a)** question on this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**
- Demonstrating secure contextual knowledge was important in gauging an audience's reaction, with one candidate noting how Antonio continues his conversation from the previous scene, commenting on the effectiveness of foreshadowing, and later on the extract, further contextual links were observed through the comparison to Hamlet ('Could I take him at his prayers?') with the observation that a 'Jacobean audience would have instantly understood this reference and be prompted to compare the two characters'.
- Discussion points included: the tragedy of Antonio's accidental death, the role of Bosola, and the significance of the Cardinal's comments (only noted by a few) were also discussed.
- A response did well due to its awareness of the changing reactions of the audience, demonstrating a sound understanding of the text as a piece of drama, describing the Duke as at 'the intensity of lunacy ... shown by his mutterings of strangling ... ' which 'serves to both unsettle the audience as well as perhaps elicit pity for the tragic Duke, doomed by his own passion and hastiness'.

Limited responses
- Showed a partial appreciation of literary features, tending to explain rather than analyse with phrases such as: 'this statement means...' although they did show a basic understanding of the audience's responses with 'would attract a sense of sympathy...'
- Partially discussed the effects of dramatic methods – action and language mainly.

Section B: Poetry

Question 5

(a) There were too few responses to the **(a)** question on this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

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(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Recognised the speaker (a young girl) and what happened to her.
- Noted how the use of techniques such as first-person narrative 'transitions into a more impersonal, clinical viewpoint using second person' which created a 'more objective and reflective lens'.
- Explored how poetic structures and techniques closely mirrored the context and emotions behind the words, with one noting how the change to 'shorter, ambiguous sentences' reflected the speaker's inability to 'give a detailed account'.
- Many also noted the 'active' men and the 'inactive' girl, the shift as the relationship(s) become more violent, the brutal sexuality. Men equalled violence, lust, brutality, uncaring and contrasted with the effects of their actions on the girl.
- Related the effects of poetic methods closely to the speaker's trauma, observing how the 'longer stanzas with enjambment may structurally replicate a stream of consciousness'.
- Integrated references to language, rhythm and imagery into an overall interpretation.
- Understood Angelou's wider contextual concerns regarding power differences between men and women in the poem.

Limited Responses

- Revealed only a partial knowledge of the poem and, in some cases, confusion over the meaning of the term 'ignorant' and misunderstanding or missing the references to sexual abuse.
- Were unsure of the context of the situation and needed to give an overview of the poem on which to structure their interpretation.
- Adopted the feature spotting route – for example caesura and personification – not a successful approach. Such responses resulted in a limited analysis of poetic methods with comments such as '... she 'used to' which is further emphasised by Angelou's use of enjambment' without any further development.
- Explored literary methods and effects at surface level, limiting the development of otherwise competent essays.

Question 6

(a) There were too few responses to the **(a)** question on this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Demonstrated understanding of the poem's meaning and showed some knowledge of the context in relation to the language, with one highlighting the irony behind the contrast of suffering and poverty in a 'rich' and 'fruitful' setting.
- Explored the depiction of the 'better life' in the countryside (with a few linking this to Blake's views on the Industrial Revolution).
- Displayed extended knowledge of the context of Holy Thursday parades and its symbolic nature, discussing attitudes to religion and the underlying hypocrisy.
- One answer observed how examples of 'broken' rhyme reflected the 'shattered' idealism seen in 'Songs of Innocence'.
- Analysed other poetic techniques, with one answer comparing the regular metre to a funeral march.
- Identified Blake's bleak poetic imagery, noting the reference to 'thorns' and 'eternal winter' and the absence of the sun with some straightforward analysis.

Limited Responses

- Seemed unsure of the situation and had no overview on which to structure response.
- Very few identified the context or compared it with the companion poem.
- Used feature spotting to explore rhyme, rhythm, repetition and language with limited further development.

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Question 7

There were too few responses to this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

Question 8

(a) There were too few responses to the **(a)** question on this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

(b) **Comprehensive Responses**

- Noted the lack of precision, for example the use of 'she', not knowing from whence she is or where she is being sent.
- Viewed the central figure as more than a refugee, focusing on themes of money, wealth and learning. A few candidates saw her as a symbol, noting the change to 'we' in the last stanza.
- Commented upon the odd time scale – observing how it feels like it's happening all at once and yet the speaker learns a new language.

Limited responses

- Demonstrated limited understanding of poetic methods.
- Partially developed points regarding the stanzas, language, tone and voice.
- Partially explored the rhymes in the final stanza and their effects.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/22
Prose and Unseen

Key messages

What candidates did well

- Candidates showed knowledge and understanding of their chosen text, with many responses to the passage-based questions showing understanding of the passage's significance in the wider text.
- Some candidates were able to analyse the writer's methods, writing about how language, form and structure are used to shape meaning.
- Personal response demonstrated the ability to engage with the chosen text independently.
- Candidates understand the need to develop a structured response which engages clearly with the question.

What candidates needed to improve

- When responding to passage-based questions, candidates should focus securely on detailed analysis of the passage itself.
- Knowledge of literary methods that writers use will support candidates in responding to the 'ways in which' prompt in the questions, and will support them in developing knowledge and understanding into analysis.
- Textual insight needs to be deepened by moving beyond discussion of surface-level observations.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Prose

Question 1

(a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.

(b) **Comprehensive responses**

- Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.

Limited responses

- Candidates selected relevant details from the passage to support their understanding though analysis of the language and imagery used was not fully developed. The final paragraph, with its rich description of the effects of the 'aqueous season', including the vivid juxtaposition of the 'bright pink jelly' and the 'dreary cotton', and the 'pages bruised with flamboyant disease' was not tackled.
- Responses included some consideration of structural elements and the shifts of tone, from the violence of the storm to Sai and the Cook 'began to laugh' when covered with flour. Few considered the transition between the first day of the storm and the 'three months, four, maybe five' that followed below the section break.
- Candidates demonstrated clear efforts to engage with the initial descriptions of the weather, recognising the impact of the personification of aspects of it and the power of the onomatopoeic 'Bang bang bang'. Mutt's response to it was also noted, even if the detail of the way the weather reduces the dog to 'a primitive life form, an amoebic creature' was not analysed. Most noted the power of the description of her eyes as 'those of a soldier in war' these could have been further developed by exploring the way in which Desai extends that metaphor to emphasise the impact of the storm on the dog.

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Question 2

(a) There were no responses to this question.

(b) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 3

(a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.

(b) **Comprehensive responses**

- Candidates demonstrated clear understanding of the significance of the passage in the wider text, discussing the way the riding lesson foreshadows John Andrew's death on the hunting field.
- Responses offered a detailed understanding of the whole of the passage, commenting on the presentation of the riding lesson itself but also the dialogue between the three characters after the lesson concludes, including the comic juxtaposition of Nanny's concerns for the mud on John's coat with John's earnest desire to see Ben worm the carthorse. Some candidates observed the amusing characterisation of Thunderclap herself and the way she 'thought better of [the jump]', disempowering John Andrew still further.
- Candidates produced close analysis of language, considering how the characterisation of Ben is shaped by his dialogue, especially his use of profanity – 'your bloody legs'; 'took an arser' – and how it contrasts to the characterisation of Tony and Brenda as well as the way in which it speaks to the significance of social class in the novel as a whole. Some observed the use of the imagery of birds – 'you'll be over like a bird' and 'you just skimmed over like a swallow' and the way it suggests the freedom riding might offer John, ironically so considering later events.
- Candidates offered sensitive personal response, comparing the presentation of John Andrew's relationship with Ben and Nanny to that with his mother and father and considering how the warmth displayed in the former, as well as the attention Ben pays to John Andrew, exposes the limitations of the latter. Some candidates observed the poignancy of the final sentence of the passage – 'Can I have my milk in mummy's room?' and the way that it draws attention to a very young child's need for maternal affection which the wider context of the novel tells us is not particularly forthcoming.

Limited responses

- Candidates selected some relevant detail from the passage on which to comment even if coverage was partial, acknowledging the significant elements of John's fall and Nanny's concern in contrast to Ben's more forthright approach.
- Responses showed emerging understanding of the methods writers use to shape meaning, with some awareness of the writer at work even if not sustained. Most commented on the dialogue in the passage, exploring the ways in which it supports characterisation, while there was less consideration of Waugh's use of language and his skilful structuring of a sentence: the description of 'Ben raised his arms … Thunderclap jumped; John rose from the saddle and landed on his back … ', for example, and the skill with which the simple subject-verb construction creates humour.
- Personal engagement with the concerns and style of the passage was evident, although points were not always supported with precise detail from the text, leading to a somewhat assertive tone in some responses.

Question 4

(a) **Comprehensive responses**

- Candidates engaged with both the phrase 'the true face of America' and the wider context of Lumbly's words, using that context to shape their response with some precision in terms of the way they discussed the many aspects of America Cora is able to see as she travels from place to place on the railroad.
- Candidates were able to select precise moments from the novel, with some use of specific quotation, to support their line of argument. Some focused on the characterisation of Ridgeway and Ethel, exploring the ideologies they present and the influence they have on Cora's journey.
- Responses showed sustained understanding of Whitehead as author and the ways in which structural choices he has made influence the reader's perception of events, commenting on

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the way in which the novel is structured around geographical setting allows Whitehead to develop the nuances of the ways the attitudes of those who Cora encounters on her journey vary.

- Candidates were able to incorporate relevant contextual detail to support their understanding of the way Whitehead uses historical anachronism, specifically medical experimentation, to present a particularly disturbing face of America while acknowledging that in historical fact, this came after the time period in which the novel is set.

Limited responses

- Responses engaged thoughtfully with the phrase 'the true face of America' and offered interpretations of it, even if supporting detail from the text was sometimes quite broad. Some candidates restricted the scope of their answer by focusing primarily on Cora and her family.
- Candidates identified relevant moments of plot to illustrate their argument, recognising the need to support their points, even if there was less sustained awareness of the author at work.
- Responses engaged with the text with enthusiasm even when analysis leaned more towards a summary of events which might represent 'the true face of America' without probing deeply into how and why they do so.

(b) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.

Section B: Unseen

Question 5

Comprehensive responses

- Candidates discussed the relationship between Sir Robert and Lady Chiltern, considering the tension between them on both a personal and ideological level and exploring the contrasts between her focus on Sir Robert's honour and his attempts to rationalise his behaviour: 'practical politics'; 'compromise'; 'circumstances'.
- Candidates explored the way stage directions were used to shape the tone of the passage, showing analytical understanding of how dramatic effect is created. There was particular focus on the ways in which the description of Sir Robert's actions – '*Biting his lip*', '*Walking up and down*', '*Stopping*' – show his unease while his speaking '*Sternly*' suggests his desire to exert his authority over his wife. Some candidates went on to consider how his '*Sitting down*' might change the dynamic of the action.
- Clear contrasts were drawn between the dialogue of the two characters to show understanding of how their use of language contributes to the tension in the scene, for example, Lady Chiltern's praise of her husband as a man who has never let the world 'soil' him, 'an ideal always'.
- The structure of the dialogue, including the length of speeches, was carefully considered. Candidates explored Lady Chiltern's use of questions, suggesting her desire to fully understand her husband's actions, and also noted the increasing length of her speeches as the passage developed, suggesting her increased confidence and certainty of the rightness of her position. Candidates commented thoughtfully on the structure of the exchange 'Why do you ask me such a question?'/'Why do you not answer it?', which seems to provide the crux of the tension between the two.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused carefully on the opening section of the passage while consideration of Lady Chiltern's longer speeches was overlooked, meaning that candidates were not able to develop their understanding of her characterisation and the way in which she develops her vision of Sir Robert. Specifically, her comment that 'we women worship when we love; and when we lose our worship we lose everything' would have benefited from greater consideration.
- In some cases, awareness of the features of the text-type could have been developed in more detail to permit consideration of dramatic effect, with explicit consideration of the way in which stage directions serve to indicate what the audience sees.
- There were responses that considered how Sir Robert and Lady Chiltern were interacting with more limited consideration of what they were discussing and how the content of their dialogue was contributing to the tension between them. In this case, responses would have benefited from paying attention to what Sir Robert is hinting that he might have done, with his references to 'certain obligations to people that one must pay' and his transition from the active voice – 'I am not changed' – to the passive – 'But circumstances alter things' – suggesting the way he seeks to distance himself from responsibility.

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Question 6

Comprehensive responses

- Candidates considered both elements of the question in their responses, exploring both the presentation of Karungi and her role in the community. Some explored the way in which 'issues varied in scope', suggesting the way Karungi's field of expertise is not a narrow one but she is called upon to advise on many things.
- Candidates explored the ways in which narrative point of view shaped the tone of the passage, the third-person perspective allowing a balanced understanding of both Karungi herself and of how she is perceived by the wider community, with focus on the latter allowing candidates to consider the ways in which other characters in the passage respond to her, including the questions 'murmured' by the old woman indicating her sceptical disbelief in Karungi's power to make a difference.
- Responses analysed the way in which the use of direct speech contributed to the characterisation of Karungi, exploring the content, tone and language choices: her speech being described with the adjectives 'long and clear' and her opening with 'Kyomya' both indicating her confidence to address a man directly, and the closing question showing she is not afraid to challenge him, although more could have been done with the detail of that question. Some touched on the way the verb 'demanded' shows Karungi's authority in dictating the tone of the meeting, in that she has the power to demand that the six girls be called to listen.
- Responses explored the tension between the matriarchal and patriarchal figures presented in the passage with relevant contextual understanding, discussing Kyomya's desire for sons, specifically. While most picked up on the significance of the naming of girls, few candidates explored the detail of the remainder of that opening paragraph and how it places Karungi's interaction with Kyomya and Kakwanzi in a wider context.

Limited responses

- Responses were able to select relevant detail to support understanding of the character, even if analysis of this detail was not fully developed, with most noting the description of Karungi as 'well respected' and enjoying the insertion of the word 'even' before 'men' to indicate that Karungi is not simply called upon by other women. Most commented too on the way Karungi is singled out with 'the mat made of cow hide' to show the respect the community has for her and her position.
- Some responses focused on the presentation of Karungi while paying limited attention to the presentation of the community she lives in and how that shapes the reader's understanding of the challenges of her role, overlooking the opportunity to consider the contrast between the treatment of boys and that of girls and how this is relevant to the situation Karungi has been asked to advise on.
- Candidates showed emerging awareness of appropriate subject terminology with some able to note the use of the third person perspective, even if the significance of that in shaping tone was not always discussed.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32
Shakespeare and Drama

Key messages

What candidates did well

- Some candidates responded to the complexity of the texts, showing knowledge and understanding of matters of language, character and action.
- There was a great deal of personal response, where candidates had plainly gone beyond what they had been taught to think for themselves about how a text might work.
- Comprehensive responses discussed the texts in terms of drama, and wrote well about how staging and action help create meaning.

What candidates needed to improve

- Some candidates needed to integrate the opinions of others more fully into their essays, using criticism as a means of deepening their personal response rather than simply including names of critics or critical schools as a matter of duty.
- Contexts were not always well used: they provided background information, rather than insight into how the text works.
- Some candidates did not fully focused on prompts in the questions ('with what dramatic effect') for example.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Shakespeare

Question 1

(a) Comprehensive responses

- These responses showed a clear understanding of the relationship between Claudius and Gertrude, considering both its private and public dimensions. Some candidates made the point that we never see them in private together, so we never know if they have plotted Old King Hamlet's murder because they love each other, or whether Claudius was acting as a sole agent.
- Context was used confidently, with candidates exploring ideas about kingship relevant to the period.
- Critical perspectives were integrated effectively to support and refine interpretations, for example by illuminating character motivation or the dramatic impact of key moments.
- There was clear awareness that an audience's perceptions of the relationship are shaped through Hamlet's viewpoint.
- Arguments were coherently presented, with a clear focus on the question and arguments developing in a clear way.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused on Claudius and Gertrude individually, rather than exploring the relationship between them. And this did not really help as the play is opaque about Gertrude's relationship with Claudius.
- At times, an emphasis on Gertrude as a product of social mores reduced engagement with the central focus of the question. This was an example of how context and background can distract candidates from the exact terms of what they have been asked to do.
- Some responses concentrated on recounting events rather than developing analysis.
- There was little sense of how the opinions of others might help to deepen or develop a case.

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- Some candidates wrote at great length, without giving enough emphasis to the requirement to select relevantly from specific moments.

(b) **Comprehensive responses**

- These responses showed a secure understanding of the scene as a turning point in both the wider play and Hamlet's psychological development. There was often relevant discussion of how both men have lost their fathers through the plotting of others.
- Candidates explored the dramatic impact of the scene, showing awareness of how an audience might respond to the confrontation and its consequences. There was understanding of the dramatic impact of much of the conversation taking place from Ophelia's grave and from the fact that the dramatic action is observed and commented on by the king and queen.
- Clear contrasts were drawn between Hamlet and Laertes, with responses considering differences in their approaches to action and how these shape the tension of the scene. The similarity of language that they use was often pointed out.
- Candidates demonstrated sound understanding of both characters' attitudes towards Ophelia and her death, linking these perspectives to the emotional intensity of the moment. Most were aware, too, that the king and queen see that the antagonism between the two is a means of furthering their aim of killing Hamlet.
- The wider play was used effectively as a point of reference to support interpretation of the scene. The behaviour and language of the two characters earlier was often commented upon.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused at length on the dead Ophelia, leading to discussion of her role in the play that moved away from the central focus of the scene.
- There were responses that dealt well with the opening part of the scene, while giving limited attention to the reactions of the King and Queen or to Claudius's final speech.
- In some cases, discussion of Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia elsewhere in the play became extended and relied on interpretations that were not consistently supported by detailed textual reference.

Question 2

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Section B: Drama

Question 3

Too few responses to comment.

Question 4

(a) **Comprehensive responses**

Too few responses to comment.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused simply on describing the Tyrone's family's suffering, with limited development of how dramatic techniques shape an audience's experience of hopelessness. Some candidates began to think about the cyclical nature of the action and about its inexorable movement towards night.
- There were responses that treated characters' despair as isolated moments, rather than recognising its cumulative and pervasive presence across the play and across all the members of the family.
- In some cases, references to dialogue or staging were general, with limited exploration of their dramatic effect. More could have been made of the permanent fog of misunderstanding that the family lives in and of the physical darkening that goes on during the play.
- Little mention was made of how the play might be differently interpreted.
- Contextual material was sometimes included as background information, rather than being used to illuminate O'Neill's dramatic presentation of the theme. Although the play is

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autobiographical (in a sense) too much can be made of O'Neill's real life, rather than of how he transformed experience into a work of art.
- Some responses relied on narrative summary, which reduced opportunities for sustained analysis of dramatic method and audience impact.

(b) Comprehensive responses
- These responses saw that the Tyrone family is in a perpetual, unbreakable circle of misunderstanding and mutual distrust. The rising and falling of the disputes in this particular episode was often well catalogued.
- There was often discussion of the particular tensions at this particular moment, with the issues of Edmund's illness and Mary's addiction seen as heightening the anger between the two.
- Comprehensive answers saw that the two have much in common.
- There was much useful discussion of how the stage directions help the actors create an interpretation.
- There was strong awareness that both Jamie and Tyrone are actors – they both have a tendency towards self-dramatisation. Their defensiveness by using quotations from playwrights was often referred to.
- Contexts such as other dramatic works and others' views were used to support and develop arguments.

Limited responses
- At times responses treated the characters as fundamentally opposed, with limited consideration of the similarities that bind them together.
- The detail of the answers was not always full enough, and points often provides limited specific textual reference: the passage was rich in detail and showed an ebb and flow between the two. This could have been discussed more in detail.
- Some responses referred to stage directions in general terms, without exploring how they help shape dramatic interpretation.
- More could have done with others' opinions, using them to support or develop discussion of O'Neill's dramatic presentation.

Question 5

Too few responses to comment.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42
Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

What candidates did well
- Candidates who provided comprehensive responses answered with relevance to the questions asked and developed answers that showed understanding and knowledge.
- Selection of support was carefully used to back up points and arguments made.
- Comprehensive responses explored personal views and critical interpretations to create interesting and relevant arguments.

What candidates needed to improve
- Some candidates needed to deal more specifically and accurately with aspects of contextual detail, including literary, social, historical and cultural aspects.
- Candidates must be sure to follow the rubric of the question paper which requires one essay answer to ***Section A*** and another essay answer to ***Section B***.
- Some candidates

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 1

(a) Comprehensive responses
- These responses showed a clear understanding of the relationship between Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley, considering how their relationship develops.
- Context was used effectively, with candidates exploring aspects about marriage and social class relevant to the period.
- Critical perspectives were used judiciously to develop and illuminate interpretations, for example by revealing details of character development or narrative choices.
- Quotation was well-used to support arguments made.
- Essays were clearly structured, often with a focused thesis statement as part of introductions.

Limited responses
- Some responses offered narrative and descriptive accounts of the relationship between Jane and Mr Bingley.
- Some contextual points could be improved for accuracy and relevance in some contextual points applied.
- Some responses did not adequately analyse Austen's characterisation, narrative structure or use of language.
- There was little reference to ways in which of how the opinions of others might help to deepen or reinforce an argument.
- Some candidates did not focus sufficiently on the question, preferring to write about Elizabeth and Mr Darcy.

(b) Comprehensive responses
- These responses showed understanding of the scene as a turning point in the story and in its importance in presenting aspects of Lady Catherine de Bourgh.
- Candidates explored how the extract relates to the wider novel, for example in terms of its importance to Elizabeth's future with Mr Darcy.

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- Responses demonstrated selection of detail from the extract to analyse in terms of form, structure and language.
- Candidates demonstrated their ability to include interpretations of others alongside their own personal readings.
- References to context were made to showcase aspects of Lady Catherine's position and the significance of marriage in the novel as a whole.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused at length on Elizabeth Bennet, leading to some descriptive and narrative commentaries that moved too far from the extract.
- There were responses that dealt effectively with the opening part of the passage, while giving limited attention to the last part.
- In some cases, analysis would have benefited from more explicit reference to aspects of form, structure and language.

Question 2

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 3

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 4

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 5

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 6

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Section B: Post 1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 7

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 8

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) **Comprehensive responses**

- Responses showed understanding of the given poem, *Matins*, considering how it is characteristic of Glück's wider work.

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- Candidates explored how the poem uses metaphorical language and voice to convey themes and ideas.
- Responses referred to other poems in the selection by name and commented on relevant features and ideas.
- Candidates demonstrated their ability to include other opinions alongside their personal responses.
- Contextual details were clearly relevant to the poem and question, integrated throughout each answer.

Limited responses

- Some responses described the poem without referring to details and effects of form, structure and language.
- Candidates did not develop their responses to the poem in sufficient detail, sometimes ending their essays abruptly.
- Some answers did not demonstrate a personal response to the poem.
- Background points were sometimes included without links to thematic or poetic aspects.
- Some answers were worked through the poem making a list of points rather than a whole argument.

Question 9

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 10

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 11

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 12

(a) Too few responses to comment.

(b) Too few responses to comment.

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