



BOARD OF STUDIES
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1998 HSC

EXAMINATION REPORT

English 2/3 Unit Common

Including:

- Marking criteria
- Sample responses
- Examiners' comments

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ENGLISH 2/3 UNIT (COMMON)

Introduction

Candidature

The candidature for the 2/3 Unit (Common) course was approximately 6,337, of whom 1,561 were 3 Unit candidates. These candidates tend to be a very able group.

The Common Questions

In 1998 the Board of Studies required the English Higher School Certificate Examination Committee to provide common questions in the 2 Unit (General) and 2/3 Unit (Common) examination papers. Common questions were written for Paper 1: Writing Task and Paper 2: Section I — Poetry, Fiction, Drama.

The purpose of the common questions was to ascertain the relative performances of candidates in the two courses. Information on the relative performances is used in the reporting of English in the Higher School Certificate.

HSC Marking Procedures

All scripts in the 2 Unit English course are marked by at least two independent markers from different groups at different stages of the marking operation. Marking of scripts begins after a pilot marking phase, during which markers are briefed on the standards established by Senior Markers after an initial reading of a wide sample of scripts. Once marking is underway, a sample script considered typical of a particular range is sent around at regular intervals to check that all markers are adhering to the marking centre standards.

Markers are given the following advice to assist them in the marking process:

1. This is a ranking procedure. Use the entire range of marks.
2. Forget school and personal standards. Forget your memories of past papers and questions. Adhere to the marking centre standards.
3. The Reading Task contains a number of questions or parts. Within each answer there will be a range of responses.
4. Mark positively — reward what is there rather than penalise what is missing.
5. Aim for accuracy, not speed.
6. Don't 'agonise' over a script. Talk to other members of your group or to your Senior Marker.
7. In general, candidate responses are those of an eighteen-year-old completing an answer under exam conditions in forty minutes.

HSC Marking Procedures for the Common Question in 2 Unit (General) and 2/3 Unit (Common) Poetry, Fiction, Drama

The question for Poetry, Fiction, Drama in the 2 Unit (General) and 2/3 Unit (Common) course was exactly the same. However, the texts in most cases were different for each course.

Examiners marked either 2 Unit (General) scripts or 2/3 Unit (Common) scripts but not both. Marker reliability was ensured through the use of an Audit Team. The Audit Team selected the pilot scripts from both sets of candidatures and also selected both 'sample' and 'example' scripts, which were distributed to markers at regular intervals.

The Audit Team also check-marked scripts from both the 2 Unit (General) and 2/3 Unit (Common) group to ensure that the common scale of marking was being adhered to. This ensured that a script worth a 10, for example, for 2 Unit (General) was the equivalent of a 10 for the 2/3 Unit (Common) course.

HSC Marking Procedures for the Common Question in 2 Unit (General) and 2/3 Unit (Common) Writing

This question was marked using the same procedures as for all other sections of the 2 Unit (General) and 2/3 Unit (Common) course. Senior Markers selected pilot samples from both sets of candidatures and the common scale was applied in relation to the marking guidelines. An Audit Team was not necessary as there were no texts to identify candidates in a particular course.

Clerical Procedures in the Marking Operations

1. All scripts from an examination centre are divided into bundles of approximately 20. Bundles from the one examination centre are distributed to many different markers. Schools are identified by an examination centre number only. These numbers are not available to markers.
2. Each bundle has an accompanying mark sheet. Marks are recorded on the mark sheet. No annotation is made on the scripts. There is a second mark sheet for the recording of marks during the second marking. Both the first and second markings are completed independently.
3. Procedures are in place to ensure that markers do not mark scripts from their own schools or in the school of their Senior Marker. In addition, markers do not mark scripts belonging to close relatives sitting for their HSC.
4. The confidential nature of the marking operation is stressed at all times and markers do not have access to marks awarded by other markers.

The Marker Reliability Operation

The marker reliability operation has two important roles. It assists Supervisors of Marking (SOMs) and Senior Markers (SMs) in establishing an appropriate marking scheme for each question during the pilot marking operation. Once the marking scheme is finalised and the actual marking operation begins, the statistical reports enable the SOMs and SMs to check that the distribution of marks established during the pilot marking operation is being maintained. To ensure that the marking scale for each question is being applied consistently, feedback is provided to SOMs and SMs on the marking patterns of each marker.

How it Works

1. When a marker allocates a mark to a script, they put a tally mark on the tally card alongside that mark.
2. The tally cards are processed and reports are generated. The reports will typically contain information such as the overall distribution of marks, the mean (average) mark and the standard deviation (spread of marks) for each question.
3. Copies of the various reports are given to the Supervisor of Marking and are used to monitor trends in marking.

Resolving Discrepancies in Marking

A pair of marks is considered discrepant if the mark awarded during the first marking differs by a set amount determined by the Board. Three or more marks are considered discrepant if the scripts are marked out of 10, for example. The discrepancy is resolved by a third marker, usually a Senior Marker, who provides a third mark without knowing the marks awarded previously. If the third marking does not resolve the discrepancy, the script is passed on to a fourth marker and so on until the discrepancy is resolved. A relatively small number of scripts is discrepant, and very few scripts require reading by a fourth marker.

Marking Guidelines

Marking guidelines for each section of an examination paper are arrived at after reading a wide range of student responses to the various questions. Guidelines assist examiners in placing scripts in a particular range. They provide broad indicators of the standards set by the candidature and should not be used as a checklist of requirements. There are many valid and acceptable ways of answering a question and the examples of student responses contained in the following pages reflect the range of responses that could occur within the categories of Above Average, Average and Below Average. They do not necessarily represent the very best responses the examiners found.

2/3 UNIT (COMMON) ENGLISH

PAPER 1 — RESOURCES AND USES OF ENGLISH AND SHAKESPEARE

SECTION I

Question 1. Reading Task (15 marks)

The Reading Question in 1998 was a single question with two passages for candidates to read in order to answer the question. The two passages were the openings to *The Shipping News* by E Annie Proulx, and *Captivity Captive* by Rodney Hall. They are reproduced below. Candidates were given 30 minutes to answer the following question.

Read the following TWO passages carefully. Each is the opening of a novel.

Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the writers' use of language, and comment on the effectiveness of EACH piece of writing.

PASSAGE A

'Here is an account of a few years in the life of Quoyale, born in Brooklyn and raised in a shuffle of dreary upstate towns.

Hive-spangled, gut roaring with gas and cramp, he survived childhood; at the state university, hand clapped over his chin, he camouflaged torment with smiles and silence. Stumbled through his twenties and into his thirties learning to separate his feelings from his life, counting on nothing. He ate prodigiously, like a ham knuckle, buttered spuds.

His jobs: distributor of vending-machine candy, all-night clerk in a convenience store, a third-rate newspaperman. At thirty-six, bereft, brimming with grief and thwarted love, Quoyale steered away to Newfoundland, the rock that had generated his ancestors, a place he had never been nor thought to go.

A watery place. And Quoyale feared water, could not swim. Again and again the father had broken his clenched grip and thrown him into pools, brooks, lakes and surf. Quoyale knew the flavour of brack and waterweed.

From this youngest son's failure to dog-paddle, the father saw other failures multiply like an explosion of virulent cells — failure to speak clearly; failure to sit up straight; failure to get up in the morning; failure in attitude; failure in ambition and ability; indeed, in everything. His own failure.

Quoyale shambled, a head taller than any child around him, was soft. He knew it. 'Ah, you lout,' said the father. But no pygmy himself. And brother Dick, the father's favourite, pretended to throw up when Quoyale came into a room, hissed 'Lardass, Snotface, Ugly Pig, Warthog, Stupid, Stinkbomb, Fart-tub, Greasebag,' pummelled and kicked until Quoyale curled, hands over head, snivelling on the linoleum. All stemmed from Quoyale's chief failure, a failure of normal appearance.

A great damp loaf of a body. At six he weighed eighty pounds. At sixteen he was buried under a casement of flesh. Head shaped like a crenshaw, no neck, reddish hair rucked back. Features as

bunched as kissed fingertips. Eyes the colour of plastic. The monstrous chin, a freakish shelf jutting from the lower face. Some anomalous gene had fired up at the moment of his begetting as a single spark sometimes leaps from banked coals, had given him a giant's chin. As a child he invented stratagems to deflect stares: a smile, downcast gaze, the right hand darting up to cover the chin.

His earliest sense of self was as a distant figure: there in the foreground was his family; here, at the limit of the far view, was he. Until he was fourteen he cherished the idea that he had been given to the wrong family, that somewhere his real people, saddled with the changeling of the Quoyles, longed for him.'

PASSAGE B

'There were crows in his eyes when he came right out with it, confessing that he had been the murderer. You could see them flapping in there. And now and again the glint of a beak. You can't tell me anything about crows I don't already know at eighty. Nor about him, either.

It's no good saying, like Norah used to, that I'm always the one who lets his imagination run riot. You ought to have seen the hungry fluttering in the look of his, those scavengers working away at the rotten flesh of corpses long dead and mostly forgotten.

Poor old bloke, the dill. Dismal is what you'd call him. Dismal the whole of his life. I can be sure of this because I knew him for all but the first couple of years of it.

He spoke the word murder in a croak. Even this came crow-sweet, what with Ireland still hanging on him, afraid to let him go, counting every one of her children (me included) and mad for numbers. Marder, he said it. Then, on account of being in his deathbed, which this time was permanent enough, the winds in his coaxing eyes fluttered and folded, twitched out again, and really did fold.

He looked peaceful; the picture of a man who has confessed his soul's torment and expects eternal absolution just for the saying of it. But I knew he was raging with excitement. What he always promised himself he would do, he had done. He never thought he'd rouse enough courage. And now here he was, flat on his back, being listened to by an inspector of police. Oh yes, he had gone that high. Not just Jim, our local constable, but an inspector down from Sydney on a special visit to nobody else.

Poor coot had scored the top brass and you could see how it set his blood spinning with grief that he hadn't made this occasion when he was younger and might have enjoyed it to the full. But there was no one else to blame, so he shut his mouth and shut his eyes and made such a good impression of being gratified that, if the whole town didn't know him for a wowser, a witness might have been pardoned for thinking he was drunk. This excitement put the colour back into his skin. He looked as if he might not die, after all. One word, murder, bringing him to life again. I thought: We shall be laughing over this for years to come.

Then he spoke some more, the flurry of crows now getting to his voice, muffling and rattling it.'

General Comments

How the question performed

The markers felt that the question was very clear in its intent, and quite focused in its requirement for an essay response. The open-ended nature of the question allowed candidates to provide a more personal approach in their response, rather than encouraging a more formulaic structure. The question's potential for allowing candidates to explore the abstract and concrete concepts and features in the passages, and to integrate their observations and interpretations in a discussion of the effectiveness of the writing, was a very positive feature of this year's question.

The direction to write an essay permitted all candidates to write an effective response, and candidates who planned an effective introduction were able to more successfully exhibit their skills in blending the complex requirements of the question. This explicit direction regarding the form of the answer assisted students to focus on the complex nature of the task within a familiar format.

Markers felt the two passages were well chosen for 2 Unit candidates, with both extracts containing a multi-layered and complex viewpoint, an interesting narrative voice, and a variety of language features which contributed to their effectiveness in interesting and engaging ways. They were very well suited to the purpose of the question. The choice of one American and one Australian passage made for interesting comparisons and contrasts in both the writers' use of language and the passages' effectiveness.

How the candidates performed

The candidates' responses revealed a genuine and personal engagement with the question and the passages, and their level of application to the task was impressive. Markers noted that excellent responses indicated a very sophisticated level of understanding about the subtleties and clever nuances contained in the passages set for study, as well as the ability to effectively integrate the different aspects of the question into a comprehensive essay response. Some of the more able candidates were able to present a perceptive and original response, exploring the subtleties and insights of language, narrative voice and the positioning of the reader/writer/narrator as revealed in each passage. Better candidates understood the many requirements of the question, took a confident stance and grasped the essence of these two very different extracts.

Candidates with a more limited understanding of the writer's craft were able to comment on features of the language used, and aspects of the writers' viewpoints in the passages. Evident among the weakest responses was the use of an acronym for discussing language features, and this tended to shift the focus of these candidates from the requirements of the question to the need to complete formulaic analysis of the passages. These candidates tended to reveal an uncertain knowledge of language features and techniques. Weaker candidates tended to opt for generalisations about the writers' use of language techniques and their effectiveness, without comparing or contrasting their use or even providing substantiating evidence of their effectiveness.

Overall, markers were pleased to note that there was a noticeable decrease in the number of candidates who were content with merely listing and/or examining language techniques rather than engaging with the demands of the question itself.

Marking Guidelines

A Range 15, 14, 13 — Well Above Average

Sophisticated examination of the effectiveness of the writer's use of language:

- rich understanding of language and the implications of its use in both passages
- confident and sustained exposition across all aspects of a thesis about both passages
- appreciation of the essence of individual texts
- sophisticated understanding of the implications of the relationship between the reader/writer/narrator and writers' intentions to position/affect reader
- sustained essay-genuine, flexible treatment, focused, concise writing
- skilfully integrates treatment of 'effectiveness' with treatment of language features.

B Range 12, 11, 10 — Above Average

Competent response to the language and its effectiveness, including significant insights:

- cohesive, structured and fluent argument
- effectively engages with question and passages
- elements of understanding of possible purposes of narrator
- analysis shows a sound understanding of technique/language features/effectiveness
- quality of insights and observations but not matched by quality of essay technique (eg some formulaic elements)
- both passages examined effectively
- variety of language features taken into account and discussed
- may present routine material but shows elements of insight in a more sophisticated structure
- insights but limited explicit treatment of language.

C Range 9, 8, 7 — Average

Recognition of language features, with some attempt to comment on effectiveness:

- quality treatment of only one passage (poor treatment of other)
- insights — but not always supported/explained
- observations lead to employing generalisations about effectiveness
- examines fairly obvious material at excessive length (eg colloquialism aspects in passage B)

- some misreading (eg not seeing compassion in passage A)
- satisfactory essay style and structure
- satisfactory understanding of the question, may be some imbalance in treatment
- may be formulaic — list of techniques
- comprehensive treatment of elements which are not central to the passage
- weaker essay structure affecting communication
- little recognition of effectiveness.

D Range 6, 5, 4 — Below Average

Limited awareness of language features and their effects:

- one passage only treated/focuses on limited features
- some mention of techniques/features but very inadequate treatment of effectiveness
- simplistic observational commentary
- significant misreading
- structured as series of barely related points
- limited attention to language use
- examples lead straight to broad or simple conclusions (eg create suspense/interest)
- formulaic — list of techniques only
- simplistic treatment of language techniques.

E Range 3, 2, 1 — Well Below Average

Inadequate response which does not address the requirements of the question:

- incidental/accidental mention of language use (few/no examples/evidence given)
- inadequate walk through passage with occasional references to images/ideas
- poorly structured or crudely formulaic response
- looks at one passage only, which is poorly examined
- trivial, simple, shallow
- connections of ideas are accidental or illogical
- paraphrases passages only
- paraphrases question only with little/no comment

- extreme brevity
- illiterate response/nonsensical response.

Example of a Well Above Average Response

‘In both passages, the writers have successfully manipulated language to create a strong personal presence and vivid images in the imagination of the reader. Passage A is an effective mosaic of emotive words and colloquialisms and Passage B is quite differently driven by an extended metaphor whose abstraction is given reality by the style of writing which imposes the storyteller on the consciousness of the reader. Both achieve their purpose as openings by engaging the reader intellectually and emotionally in the subject.

Passage A claims to be an ‘account of a few years in the life of Quoye’, although it gives the reader rather than a chronological account, an overwhelming sense of Quoye himself and the circumstance which define him. The language employed by the writer has been selected in order to make this personal impression on a reader, being emotive to a great degree. ‘Hive-spangled, gut roaring with gas and cramp’ is a violent image ‘roaring’ and impresses a revulsion upon the reader. By continuing with the word ‘survived’, the writer draws us in to the predicament of Quoye, since he not only suffered poor health, but struggled against it. By choosing such emotive language, the writer establishes a degree of empathy of readers for the main character.

Passage B, conversely, makes no initial statement about the subject of the novel, instead opening with the haunting description of a self-confessed murderer. The choice of a crow as the centre of the extended metaphor is extremely successful in providing the murderer with an element of evil. It is a sinister image, conjuring into the imagination black, violent, potentially brutal birds – who cleverly are termed a ‘murder’ of crows when described collectively. Phrases such as ‘the glint of a beak’ convey a coldness which contrasts to the familiar tone of the remainder of the piece, an easy tone created by the colloquial relation of the story ‘Poor old bloke, the dill ... I knew him for all but the first couple of years’. By offsetting the cruel opening image with a warmer tone, the writer of Passage B masterfully creates an unease and certain anticipation among his readers.

The tone of Passage A is also instrumental in achieving an effective opening. Indeed, more than the content and information provided about Quoye, it is our emotional impression of the main character which is the strength of the passage. By using fractured sentences ‘A watery place’, ‘A great damp loaf of a body’, the writer forces the reader to continually shift the focus of the mind’s eye from situation to situation. This structure, combined with the powerfully connotative language discussed previously, has the effect of creating a tone which reflects the fragmentation and tragedy of Quoye. This tone is the essential thread in the mosaic of images and sensations produced by the opening of the novel.

Both authors conclude their openings in a manner which provides their readers with an interest in their topic that would draw them further into the body of the piece of the writing. In Passage A, which previously gave the reader an outside view of Quoye, moves onto a far more intimate level, by presenting a view of Quoye’s internal characteristics. That he ‘cherished the idea he had been given to the wrong family’ shows the reader that within the body of a man who ‘failed’ to have a ‘normal appearance’ there dwells a soul possessed of imagination and idealism. This new element provokes the mind of the reader into questioning whether, by some possibility, the ideals and desires of Quoye may help him combat the abuse and discouragement that surrounds him. The

effect of the last sentence of this opening provides a maximum impact on the reader, because it combines the effect of tone, language and structure with the suggestion of a solution – a sentence which draws the reader further into the novel. Similarly, in Passage B, the last sentence exacerbates the impact of the previous paragraphs, re-emphasising the potential coldness and brutality of the murder of crows, which now ‘flurry’ in his voice. By stating ‘then he spoke some more’, it is implied that ‘the dill’ proceeded to explain himself and that his muffled and rattled words contain the information that the curious reader instinctively desires. Both passages conclude their opening with a sentence of provocative impact.

In both passages, the writers masterfully manipulate language to draw their readers into their novel. By exploiting sentence structure, tone, vocabulary and by using other such lexical devices, the writers effectively establish in their readers the desire to find answers and resolutions to the situations suggested in these openings.’

Examiner’s Comments

This is a focused answer which addresses all aspects of the question very effectively, most particularly in regard to the complex issues associated with the relationship between reader/writer/narrator. It clearly demonstrates a sophisticated examination of the effectiveness of the writers’ use of language, and this is a confident and sustained essay answer.

Example of an Above Average Response

‘Passage A is an intelligently constructed piece of writing, in which the writer, in great detail, describes the life of Quoye, a man whose life had been one of hidden shame and depression. The language used by the writer reflects this depression; the descriptions of Quoye and his life representing nothing but disappointment and failure. Passage B is a great contrast in that the writer does not use the same density of descriptive language of that of the writer of Passage A. Instead of describing, at great lengths, the life of the old man, the subject of the passage, the writer, in more causal language, describes the scene of the old man’s gratification in his deathbed.

Passage A is a very rich interpretation of the life of Quoye, not in the sense of the richness of his life, but the richness of experience and of description: the writer uses heaving imagery such as ‘he camouflaged torment with smiles and silence’, this sentence not only giving the reader a picture of the outside but also one of within Quoye. The use of ‘stumbled’ in the sentence ‘stumbled through his twenties’ shows the reader that all of his life was a great effort, his life was one of learning how to cope with what he was/is.

Quoye’s occupations are those of a person who is not destined to succeed in his life, ‘third-rate newspaperman’, this job description almost mocking him, ‘brimming with grief and thwarted love’. Quoye is forced to move to the place of torment, the writer emphasising the effects of this place on him, ‘A watery place’ and Quoye fearing water.

This account of the tormented life of Quoye continues to even his own family, the writer using what is usually a sanctuary for the tormented as an example of the rejection that Quoye has had to suffer, his ‘failure of normal appearance’.

The writer of Passage B uses a very different technique to convey to the reader the images that he/she is attempting too. This passage is not based around the complex labyrinth of description that the first writer utilised but instead used more simplistic and familiar language and focussed more attention on the emotions of the old man.

The description of the old man was still effective in that it achieved its aim of conveying the old man's thoughts and aspirations, the aspiration of 'murder' and his love of it.

The writer of this passage uses a similar aspect of point of view to the writer of passage A in that both of them give the impression that the person they are talking about is someone they knew well.

The old man's deathbed is the place where he has finally found his 'external absolution' and the writer sees clearly that the old man actually is feeling better for saying that he had murdered, as if it brought some sort of contorted pleasure.

The second-last point that the writer raises certainly changes the tone of his passage dramatically 'I thought: We shall be laughing over this for years to come'.

The two passages are highly contrasting pieces. One is a brilliant, deep description of the life of a shunned, out of place and tormented soul, Quoye, whereas the other is a darker, and strangely evil passage about the pleasure an old man had at the thought of 'murder'. The language in the former passage created vivid strong images of the rejected man, Quoye and is very effective in doing so. The latter passage was more vague in 'conveying' its message or intent, although the language utilised by the writer seemed to be adequate in describing the scene that the writer saw.'

Examiner's Comments

The treatment of Passage A is quite perceptive as to character and analyses a few of the writing strategies. There is a distinctly weaker treatment in Passage B, which does not engage effectively with the sustained metaphor of the crow and its implications, and does not discuss many of the language techniques employed by the writer. It is a competent and controlled response and includes significant insights into the passages.

Question 2. Writing Task (20 marks)

Answer the question in the Question 2 Answer Booklet provided.

Allow about 40 minutes for this question.

Look at the picture below.

Imagine the letter she is reading.

Your task: write the letter.

Write at least 300 words.

(Do NOT sign the letter with your own name or address.)

General Comments

How the question performed

The 1998 Writing Task catered to the wide variety of candidates presenting at 2 Unit General and 2/3 Unit Common levels. The stimulus material, that of the girl on the train, and the instructions to write a letter, gave all candidates an opportunity to engage with the task.

The situation suggested by the picture also had the effect of encouraging a great deal of emotional content, with the result that students were able to draw on their own experiences, and the experiences gained from other material, such as literature, television and movies. This resulted in many stereotypical, clichéd scripts which were predictable, and lacked genuine development of the ‘voice’ of the writer. Letter writing is not something undertaken by many students outside of classroom experiences, and this led to many students having difficulty in establishing and/or sustaining the appropriate ‘voice’ for the letter chosen.

More able candidates took advantage of both form and the situation provided by the stimulus to write complex, sophisticated pieces of writing, using powerful language and voice to engage the reader.

In practice, however, it was clear that many able candidates were constrained by the form (letter) and situation both being prescribed. Many tended to be ‘safe’, and the degree of creativity was weaker than last year. Notwithstanding this, the guidelines for marking the Writing Task successfully discriminated across the range of candidates from A to E level responses.

How the candidates performed

Overall, most candidates completed the task competently, encouraged by the situation and the type of content it seemed to suggest, and most were able to write a letter about a chosen situation, even if not fully or clearly developed in all cases.

The better candidates understood what was being offered through the combination of letter and situation, and responded accordingly. They were able to establish and maintain a genuine and appropriate voice, through language, content and structure. They developed a sense of authentic detail and creative layering that produced, and sustained, the engagement of the reader. Better candidates also showed an awareness of language, in selectively using appropriate vocabulary, and producing a structural unity or completeness. They planned their writing, and ideas

thoughtfully and clearly developed across a wide range of letters.

Weaker candidates presented stereotypical and clichéd personal situations, often in an overly conversational or narrative fashion within the letter. The voice or person was either not developed, or developed in a simple fashion only. These candidates produced writing which could not sustain the engagement of the reader. They showed little selectivity writing in language, with either a florid style, or little description. Some weaker candidates presented quite implausible situations, which really did not produce any development of either voice or engagement.

Very weak candidates had little or no sense of letter at all.

For many candidates who attempted to write different types of letters (eg letters from various authorities) the creation of an appropriate voice proved difficult.

1998 Writing Guidelines

The guidelines assist the marking of the question. They are distributed to markers who are advised that each script is to be considered in the context of how it fulfils the guidelines. Markers are requested to bring to the attention of their Senior Marker any script which does not comply with the guidelines.

There are many ways to respond to this writing task. They include the use of the letter/sense of the letter. While the engagement of the reader is the ultimate aim of each piece of writing, how the writing actually achieves that engagement will vary. These guidelines reflect the various elements through which engagement occurs, and in turn reflect the combinations and emphases of those elements within the different types. Markers will encounter a variety of responses in their marking, and need to consider the manner in which they operate.

The different ranges may be characterised by the following:

A Range 13, 14, 15 — Well Above Average

Sustains the engagement of the reader through:

- the establishment of a clear and appropriate voice which is sustained throughout
- control in the selective and appropriate use of language to enhance the writer's purpose
- a sense of completeness of the piece, in which the letter is central to the piece of writing
- successful use of the letter to fulfil the writer's intention
- complex, sophisticated development of persona/situation/voice/content/language.

B Range 10, 11, 12 — Above Average

Engages the reader through:

- the establishment of a clear and appropriate voice

- control in the use of appropriate language to achieve the writer's purpose
- use of the letter/establishment of strong sense of letter to achieve the writer's purpose
- effective development of persona/situation/voice/content/language.

C Range 7, 8, 9 — Average

Inconsistent engagement, or engagement on a simple level, through:

- the establishment of a voice lacking development or consistency
- reasonable control of use of language
- use of the letter/establishment of a clear sense of letter
- simple or pedestrian presentation of persona/situation/voice/content/language (could be repetitive or overwritten).

D Range 4, 5, 6 — Below Average

Limited engagement of the reader through:

- limited voice
- could be illiterate or contain problems in expression
- limited use of letter/limited establishment of the sense of letter
- very simple or unclear or undeveloped persona/situation/voice/content/language (could be disjointed, short/undeveloped or long/rambling).

E Range 0, 1, 2, 3 — Well Below Average

Little or no engagement of the reader:

- voice not established
- could be illiterate or have poor control of language
- no sense of letter
- little or no persona/situation/voice/content
- may be incomplete but literate.

An Example of a Well Above Average Response

‘What did I tell you? You didn’t listen to me did you? Think you can outsmart me? No way! What do you take me for?’¹ I said from the beginning – no complications, no muck-ups, and I’ll give him back. You meet me, come out with the money, and we’ll exchange – I take the money, you take him back. As simple as that. See how easy it would’ve been? But noooo... you thought you could fool me, didn’t you? Hey I’m not the low-life intellectual idiot you think I am. Yeah I know what I’m doing it’s not the first time I’ve done this. You know.

Anyway. You didn’t give me what I wanted, how I wanted it, so the same goes for you. Do you wanna listen to what I did to him? I don’t care I’m telling you away.²

I left him in the cellar, no food, no water... nothing. For the whole time. Pitch dark up there too, wouldn’t be able to see my tat if I waved it right in front of my eyes. Ha ha. Yeah, I left him there, but I couldn’t let him go that easily. After what you made me go through. So I went up there last night – he was sleeping. And then I took him to the bathroom where I had filled the bathtub with scorching hot water, and shoved him in there squirmed and wriggled trying to get free, but couldn’t let him go, could I? I could see his skin turning red gosh it was exciting to watch. But that isn’t even the half of it. Just before he had had it, I took him out and took him back into the cellar.

This is where the fun begins. I took out my fork – my favourite one that I dented a little last time doing this. Those eyeballs of his were really getting to me- darting left to right, right to left, up and down like that. So I just absolutely had to get rid of those first. In went the fork, out come the eyeballs. Ha ha ha. Now wasn’t that fun?

But I’m still not finished yet. I let in my pet Doberman who chopped him all to bits. Pieces of little body parts all over my cellar floor. It was beautiful.³ Absolutely marvellous, it was, just marvellous.

So now how do you feel, huh? Paid you back, didn’t I? Yeah, well that’s what you get if you mess around with a person like me. I’m for real, man! I’m for real! No playing games with this guy. And always remember, – I’ll be watching you. Any more fishy business and you’ll get it too. You’ll be joining your lizard.’⁴

1 Effective use of rhetorical questions to immediately engage the reader and establish the threatening aggressive tone.

2 Establishment of strong persona through control of language evidenced in the variety of sentence type and structure.

3 Use of short, sharp statements to contribute to the aggression.

4 Clever twist at the end of the script which adds shock value and humour.

Examiner's Comments

A clever, complex piece of writing. A strong persona, sinister and menacing is established through control in the selective use of language. The conclusion surprises and disturbs the reader who has been cleverly deceived by the writer.

An Example of an Above Average Response

“Rose Cottage”

Wentshores VIC 4075

22 May 1983

Dear Amy,

I am sorry to tell you this way but I feel if I tell you over the phone then it will really be true and I'm not ready to except that yet.⁵

Yesterday afternoon I went for a horse ride with my youngest brother Tony. The sun was so warm for early spring and the horses were really thirsty. We rode over to the old stockman's hut. You know the one we were going to camp in last summer until Brad told us it was haunted.⁶ Well Tony wanted to see if the mulberry vine that's growing there had any ripe mulberries yet. We got to the long paddock, the one near the creek, and Tony dared me to race him. Well you know me I won't go back on a dare. So off I went it felt so good.

The wind, the speed I felt so alive. How ironic is that? As I was feeling so alive Tony lost his life.⁷ I didn't see it happen I just heard a small yell and a thud. Tony was slightly behind me at the time. I stopped and turned around and there he was Amy, my little brother lying on ground not moving. It happened so quickly I couldn't have stopped it but I wish it was me it was my fault Amy.

He wasn't wearing a helmet because we decided it was too hot to be worried about a heavy hat on our heads. I was the oldest, Amy I should have know how dangerous it is not to wear a helmet. I should have made him put it on. But I never imagined that this could happen. The horse found a rabbit hole and fell. He threw Tony over his head and he felt on to probably the only rock in the whole paddock.⁸ Mum and Dad are devastated and I know that they would never say it but I know it's me that they blame, me! I blame myself so why shouldn't they?⁹ He was only ten, Amy, ten. His life hadn't really begun. Remember the time he hid in the tree and threw the overripe pears at us we could have killed him for that. What I would give to walk outside now and feel a ripe pear splatter on my back and hear that impish laugh. I would give anything.

I wish you were here, instead of living hundreds of kilometres away in the city. I need my best friend Amy, please will you come soon please.¹⁰

5 The opening of the letter establishes a tone of sincerity and the feeling that some news of great importance is to follow.

6 The simplicity of the language reflects the persona of the writer and the reminiscences of the past allow the reader to engage with the situation.

7 The writer's guilt becomes apparent in her effective contrasting of her feeling of energy and the death of her brother.

8 The voice of the writer is maintained through the simple retelling of the accident as she grapples with the reality of her brother's death.

9 The simple repetition effectively conveys the tragedy and poignancy of the loss and is reflective of the style of the writer.

10 This section effectively develops the persona and the reader clearly understand the personal struggle of Reanna.

It's so sad here I feel like I can't breathe, every breath is painful. When I woke up this morning for a split second I forgot what had happened and for that split second I felt normal. And then it all came rushing back. I see him lying there, Amy a million times in my head and each time I see it the feeling's getting worse. Will I ever feel that normality again? I hope so because the feeling's that I feel now are almost unbearable.

Amy I am so lost my brother is gone, I feel my parents blame me, I blame me. I need your friendship and love please come.¹¹

Your Best Friend

Reanna

P.S: Please don't blame me, enough people blame me as it is. And if you blame me then it would be unbearable.'

Examiner's Comments

The script uses the letter form effectively and therefore addresses the set task.

The letter engages the reader through the establishment of the voice of the writer who is grappling with her guilt over her brother's death. The simplicity of language and the sincere tone are committed with the persona of the writer. There is good control of appropriate language, however they are lapses of expression. The effective development of persona, situation, voice and control make this on above average script.

¹¹ The conclusion is controlled and appropriate to the writer's purpose. It clearly states her feelings and her personal plea evokes an emotive response from the reader.

An Example of an Average Response

Nicholas Smith
27 Shellbank Ave
Mosman NSW 2088¹²
26 October 1998

Dearest Sheryl,

I don't know how gently I can break this sudden news to you but here it goes.¹³ About six days ago your father, my older brother, fell ill. The doctors said that he had a severe case of fever, his temperature reaching highs of forty-one degrees celsius. They put him in a basin of ice to cool his body down but unfortunately it did not run down his temperature.¹⁴

I have been visiting the Mount Alvernia Hospital everyday since he has been admitted. And I'm extremely sad to say that his condition is getting no better, but in fact his health is fast deteriorating.¹⁵ The doctors and specialists are doing their utmost best to try and make him well again.¹⁶ Today when I visited James, he told me to pass on this message to you if he does not see you ever again.¹⁷ Your father wants you to know that you're his special daughter and that he loves you and wishes he could see you before he is reunited with God.¹⁸ He also wants you to promise him that you'll take good care of your younger brother, Joshua. He is too young to understand what's going on now but please take extra care of him when I am gone.¹⁹

I have taken the necessary bookings to fly you home tomorrow. Your flight departs at 8.30 am and I'll pick you up from the airport and go straight to see your father. I have spoken to your headmaster and told him about the situation, he told me to tell you to spend as much time with Dad as possible and not worry about school for the time being.²⁰

Don't worry too much now, I'm sure your father will recover soon, he was always a very courageous man. So I'll see you tomorrow at noon. Take care.²¹

Yours sincerely,
Nicholas Smith'

Examiner's Comments

A predictable pedestrian response that addresses the scope of the question. The simplistic purpose is achieved through simple sentence structure and vocabulary, literal repetitive language and superficial development of persona and situation. The response has very limited audience engagement and is simpler in content.

12 Establishes letter format.

13 Quickly addresses question via simple presentation of persona and situation.

14 Continues simple presentation of situation and uses repetitive language.

15 Introduction of complication but little development.

16 Lack of control of language.

17 Pedestrian presentation and lack of engagement continues.

18 More repetitive language, eg 'you'.

19 Poor structure, lack of control highlighted by repetition.

20 Simplistic presentation of situation fails to develop tension.

21 Predictable unvaried sentence structure and literal language fail to create interest.

SECTION II — SHAKESPEARE

Question 3. Hamlet

How does the language of the play convey Hamlet's perception of the world and of his place in it?

Base your answer on the soliloquy printed here, but you should consider other speeches in the play as well.

HAMLET: O that this too too sallied flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the everlasting had not fixt
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God , O God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead. Nay, not so much, not two!
So excellent a king, that was to this,
Hyperion to a satyr: so loving to my mother
That he might not between the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth.
Must I remember? Why, she should hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on, and yet, within a month —
Let me not think on't! Frailty, thy name is woman.
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears, why she —
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer — married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father

Than I to Hercules. Within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot, come to good.
But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.'

Introduction

The Shakespeare question is the only compulsory common text of the 2 Unit Related Course and as such is the focus of a good deal of preparation and study by all related candidates who comprise, by and large, the most capable English students in the state. It is a heavily weighted component of Paper 1: Resources and Uses of English and Shakespeare and a fifty minute essay question, which means that students write sustained and comparatively lengthy responses to a question for which they are very well prepared.

General Comments

Generally, the question this year allowed candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the play through discussion of the central character and the dramatist's use of language. The inclusion of a familiar passage (first soliloquy) in the question gave all students the opportunity to structure a response and develop their thesis. The major difficulty for students was to synthesise the three major components of the question: Hamlet's perception of the world and his place in it; analysis/discussion of the set passage; and discussion of the language of the wider play. Better responses tended to address Shakespeare's use of language to present Hamlet's perception of the world and his place in it and weave the soliloquy and other language features into this discussion. These better responses demonstrated sophistication in their understanding of the play and Hamlet's character, as well as an obvious understanding of the interplay of language and idea. Their discussion of language was analytical and explicit though occasionally cleverly implicit. These responses demonstrated very good control of their own language and expression in presenting insightful comment on the text.

Weaker responses generally delivered less explicit discussion of language, relying more on straight character analysis supported by quotation to answer the question. They were often very reliant on the set passage as the organising principle for their essay and demonstrated a simple understanding of the nature of Hamlet's perception of the world.

Well Above Average Responses

Responses in the 'A' range were typified by sophisticated and controlled expression of a complex, sustained thesis. Candidates often tackled the question directly through a perceptive discussion of the language of the play and the way Shakespeare shapes the audience's responses through the interplay of language, idea and drama. These responses were able to use the set passage within this broader framework to exemplify their argument. Analytical, explicit discussion of language, not merely confined to lists of similar imagery, was strongly evident in these responses. The responses, in discussing language, conveyed an insightful understanding of the complexities of Hamlet's changing perception of the world and his place in it as well as an acute awareness of the dramatic qualities of the play.

Typical 'A' Range Response

The following script is typical of the 'A' range response. It presents a comprehensive vision of Hamlet's perception of the world and explicitly discusses, in an analytical way, the language of the play as a whole and how this is evident in the set passage. It is a very thorough, albeit imperfect, response.

'The language of Hamlet not only embodies the central themes of the play but it also conveys in a very vivid and personal way the essence of Hamlet as a dynamic character. It is perhaps in his soliloquies that we most clearly see his passion, his complexity as a fallible man, his introspection and the extent of his moral and philosophical deliberations that cause him such intense agony and torment as he struggles to find the 'right' path of action (if such a thing even exists) in response to his duty as 'the son of a dear father murdered...'

The significance of Hamlet's very first soliloquy in the second scene of the play is that we see Hamlet's melancholy and depression before the ghost's revelation. Hamlet's response to the new order in Denmark is clearly reflected in lines such as 'How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable/Seem to me all the uses of this world!' However, at this stage, such feelings seem disproportionate to the events and having witnessed Claudius' paternal remonstrations previously, we are inclined to feel that Hamlet is unreasonable in his grief for his father and revulsion at his mother's remarriage to his uncle. After all, Hamlet talks of 'self slaughter' as an escape from the torment of this world.

It is the ghost's revelation to Hamlet which confirms his doubts about his father's death and allows the audience to see his anguish. He cries 'O my prophetic soul!' and when he learns of how his father was murdered by his own brother, to whom his mother is now married. The extent of his anger and horror is accentuated by his short disconnected speech as he considers what the ghost has told him. At this stage the duality of Hamlet's nature – his longing for and rejection of the typical role of avenger – is introduced in the conflicting statements he makes. Firstly, to his father he cries: 'Haste me to know't that I with wings as swift as meditation/Or the thoughts of love, may sweep to my revenge.' The comment is highly ironic in retrospect as the issue of delay, whether forced or avoidable, is explored, but his concluding lament 'The time is out of joint. O cursed spite that ever I was born to set things right!' shows Hamlet's reluctance to carry out the duty of revenge.

On a symbolic level, the ghost's appearance is a portent which unleashes the violence of the past into the present. The seeds of the conflict were sown when old Hamlet was murdered and this sin lives on in the incestuous marriage of Claudius and Gertrude. These sins of adultery, fratricide and incest are a disease which under the disguise of the merriment and gaiety of the court, is silently and covertly infecting the state and the minds and souls of the people within it. This idea is introduced to us in the first scene through the setting: a cold, dark night adds to a sense of anticipation and uncertainty and this foreboding is enhanced in the Marcellus' comment: 'This bodes some strange eruption to our state...' Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.' It is this feeling of impending calamity that Hamlet expresses in his first soliloquy and he uses the imagery of 'an unweeded garden/that grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature possess it merely' to express his revulsion at the world around him which seems corrupted by evil and which he describes to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as '... but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.'

Hamlet himself is not immune to the world around him and comments towards the middle of the play '... my wit's diseased...'. On the literal level he is referring to his 'antic disposition' yet underneath his 'crafty madness' which he uses as a tool to challenge the King and perhaps as a release from the turbulent emotions within himself, we see in the soliloquies a man who is 'passion's slave', a man stretched to the limits of reason and sanity by the circumstances he has become drawn into and cannot escape from. Either way, to avenge his father through killing Claudius or to refuse the task at hand, will have dire and costly consequences for Hamlet and those around him. Either course of action cannot bring his father back or restore his mother's innocence. In addition Hamlet must cope with the tremendous psychological and emotional burden alone, as the role of avenger necessitates isolation and secrecy.

A further factor contributing to Hamlet's state of mind, which balances on the very brink of insanity, is his preoccupation with the inconstancy of women. In fact, his mother's behaviour and her betrayal of her first husband seem to occupy Hamlet's mind and wound him more deeply than the murder of his father. Hamlet reveals in his first soliloquy that it is the 'o'erhasty marriage' which is at the heart of his melancholy. The sense of betrayal is acute in his broken speech; 'Why she should hang on him/As if increase of appetite had gown/By what it fed on, and yet, within a month - ...' 'Like Niobe, all tears, why she - O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason/Would have mourned longer - married with my uncle...' as is Hamlet's disbelief at the hypocrisy of her actions in mourning so extravagantly for old Hamlet only '...to post/ With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!' The fact that Hamlet has already come to the generalisation 'Frailty, thy name is woman', is indicative of how deeply disturbed he is and how much he has already struggled with his feelings about the betrayal. This feeling is made worse as Hamlet considers the disparity in worthiness of his father to Claudius ('Hyperion to a satyr') and consequently, the lack of discernment in his mother's choice.

Ophelia, Hamlet's lover, becomes the victim of his obsession with the deceit of women. Regardless of how unjust Hamlet is in his accusations of Ophelia's hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, Hamlet's fury that even this member of the 'gentler sex' and represented as an innocent is capable of deceit, is understandable. He perceives that even this last vestige of purity and goodness has become corrupted below the surface and he is left awash in a wave of disease.

Furthermore, Shakespeare shows us this obsession in Hamlet's constant debasement of the sexual act and his castigation of romantic love as being merely a facade for lust. As he speaks with Polonius he talks of 'carrion kissing flesh' and in the closet scene Hamlet cannot control his tirade against his mother as he visualises 'the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, stewed in corruption,

honeying and making love over the nasty sty...' He again draws on the imagery of disease as he warns his mother that self-deception 'will but skin and film the ulcerous place, whiles rank corruption, mining all within, infects unseen.'

Complementing this theme of falseness and betrayal is Shakespeare's preoccupation with the theatre as a mirror of life and in the play Hamlet constantly searches for truth beyond the surface which is so often an inversion or illusion of reality. This can be seen in his conversation with his mother when he responds to her gentle chiding with 'seems, nay it is. I know not seems ... These indeed 'seem' for they are actions a man might play.' The use of a play within a play echoes a belief of the Elizabethans that seeing evil played out on a stage would induce a sinner to a confession. Additionally, Hamlet becomes resigned to the power of an abstract to govern human existence, be that fate or the hand of God, as he concludes: 'we defy augury. There's special providence in the fall of a sparrow.'

It is Shakespeare's seamless manipulation of language in Hamlet that reveals the complexity of the play's protagonist and invites the audience to empathise with his struggle. It is also through Hamlet's journey to acceptance of his lot that the chief concerns of the play are revealed.'

Above Average Responses

'B' range responses were generally fluent, coherent essays which demonstrated a good knowledge of the play but without the confidence and sophistication to approach the question through a focused and direct discussion of the language of the play. They primarily tended to focus on Hamlet's perception of the world and his place in it and how the language reflected this perception. The discussion of language tended to be less explicit and analytical, and more descriptive. They often used the set passage as the launching pad for a discussion of the language of the play as a whole rather than incorporate the passage into a broader discussion of Shakespeare's language use in defining Hamlet's perception of the world. They tended to give relevant examples of other images of corruption, misogyny, sexuality, godlike veneration of his father etc, which were linked well to their discussion of the passage. They also often went beyond discussion of imagery alone and encompassed issues related to tone and syntax.

Typical 'B' Range Response

The following script is typical of the 'B' range response. It is articulate, coherent and argues its case largely through the set passage but expands into discussion of the wider play drawing very good support, through quotation, from other speeches. Discussion of language is explicit and meaningful and directed towards arguing a case for Hamlet's disgust at the corruption of the world around him.

'Hamlet's perception of the world is fantastically conveyed in this soliloquy. The language used is the essential ingredient for conveying the depth and passion of Hamlet's feelings – his distaste for the world, and his disgust at the corruption which 'infects unseen' in the state of Denmark.

The beginning of the soliloquy reveals Hamlet's death wish. The imagery used here, of him wishing his flesh to 'melt/Thaw and resolve itself into a dew' is representative of his complete disenchantment with the world. It creates a deep impression in the audience's mind – that he should find the world so disengaging as to wish death upon himself.

The words 'weary, stale, flat and unprofitable' also compound this point. They reveal Hamlet's intense feeling of world weariness. Neither 'man nor woman' nor the beauties of the world delights Hamlet anymore.

The reasons for Hamlet's intense feelings of disgust with the world are revealed later in the soliloquy; his father 'but two months dead', and his mother's 'most wicked speed' to post to 'incestuous sheets'. Hamlet's absolute disgust at the corruption of his mother's apparently overwhelming sexual appetite, and his feelings of faithfulness towards his dead father are made apparent through the passionate language he uses. His comparison of his father and Claudius as 'hyperion to a satyr' and his comment that 'a beast that wants discourse of reason /Would have mourn'd longer.'

Hamlet's disgust at his mother's sexual appetite is shown continually throughout the play. The image of being 'stewed in corruption, honeying and making love over the nasty sty' epitomises his intense feelings.

Hamlet's obvious distaste towards his mother's actions is the catalyst for much of Hamlet's melancholy. He develops a deep distrust for female sexuality in general, which in turn leads him to be disgusted at Ophelia.

The innocence of Hamlet's world has been lost forever. Hamlet's disgust at his mother's corrupt sexual appetite mirrors his feelings of the corruption of society in general, and introduces his view that beneath the healthy exterior, corruption 'infects unseen'.

Hamlet's intense dislike for Claudius is shown in the soliloquy. His hatred of Claudius contributes greatly to Hamlet's disenchanting view of the world. The fact that Claudius is so much an opposite of the old king – so scheming and distrustful – causes Hamlet even more grief. The change of ruler reflects the change of the entire state – its downfall into a state of corruption.

Hamlet's views on the differences between Claudius and the old king are presented well through his language – 'but no more like my father/ Than I to Hercules.' Hamlet emphasises the fact that the old and new ruler are absolute opposites – just as the moral condition of the state is completely different now than what it had been previously.

The language used in this soliloquy, and indeed through much of the play, reflect Hamlet's feelings of nihilism towards the world. He feels he has no place in this world of corruption, and the only thing preventing him from suicide is the fact that God's canon is fixed 'gainst it.

The imagery used here is undoubtedly the most important method of conveying the intensity and feelings of Hamlet.'

Average Responses

'C' range responses were generally based on a discussion of Hamlet's perception of the world and his place in it and how the language of the play and passage demonstrated this. Answers were generally competent, literate discussions of Hamlet's character demonstrating sound knowledge of the play. They were often based heavily on analysis/discussion of the set passage with some movement out into the rest of the play. The discussion of the language of the wider play was usually confined to broad generalisations, quotations unsupported by analysis or explicit comment, and labelling or listing of images or language devices. Much language discussion was implicit with occasional flashes of explicit comment. Responses did not always make a distinction between Hamlet's use of language and Shakespeare's. Corruption imagery in the passage was

generally well discussed with further examples of corruption references given to support the argument that Hamlet perceives the world as corrupt.

Typical 'C' Range Response

The following script is typical of the 'C' range response. There is some explicit language discussion though it is generalised and not very meaningful. The response does do a competent job of outlining Hamlet's view of the world and uses appropriate quotation to support the discussion.

'The language used in Hamlet effectively shows Hamlet's absolute disgust of life and everything in it. The soliloquy reflects his mental anguish after his fathers death and his mothers hasty marriage, even before he discovers that his father was murdered. The use of adjectives, dashes, repetition and sentences of various lengths show the speech is spontaneous and unplanned, and that these are his true feelings.

The strong, harsh words and adjectives used by Hamlet in this speech show that there is nothing good left in the world. '... weary, stale, flat and unprofitable.' His speech is full of corruption images like 'unweeded garden' which he uses in other parts of the play eg 'foul and pestilent congregation of vapours'

This soliloquy is delivered at a time when Hamlet has not yet seen the ghost of his father, and is unaware he has been murdered. It indicates a strong love of his father, and how he feels betrayed by his mother 'to post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets!' These feelings understandably cause Hamlet to hate Claudius, which is one of the main issues of the play.

The soliloquy brings out another issue that is of great concern to Hamlet and other characters in the play. It is the issue of things being not what they seem. '... the salt of most unrighteous tears Had left the flushing in her galled eyes.' He also makes another important speech to his mother about seeming to be grieving, and his true mourning. This shows how Hamlet believes his father should have been honoured and his memory respected, and this disrespect for his father causes him to feel more disgusted with his mother and the world.

The last line of Hamlet's soliloquy is very important in understanding how he views the world. 'But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.' This shows Hamlet has no one that he can really trust and confide in, and this also colours his view of life. He is going through mental torture after the loss of his father, and is forced to bear this on his own, with no help from friends or family.

The loneliness Hamlet feels throughout the play explains much of his behaviour and outbursts. His father has recently died: he feels betrayed by his mother; his lover (Ophelia) has withdrawn from him, and his friends (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) are working for the king. This naturally increases his sense of isolation and desperation. And this shows in the language he uses when talking to these other characters. To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern he says '... there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.' This clearly shows how Hamlet feels trapped and alone, and has no one to support him.

He also treats Ophelia very harshly, using coarse and abrupt language when speaking to her. This shows how angry he is that she has suddenly withdrawn her love. The conversation he has with his mother in her bedroom also demonstrates how wrong he perceives her actions as being, and shows his dim and hopeless outlook on life.

The language Hamlet uses clearly demonstrates that he views his world in a disparaging and hateful light. He is disgusted with his mother, his friends and his lover, and shows this with his harsh, angry language. ‘sblood! Do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?’ it reflects the agony of his soul and his mental anguish after the death of his father. The anguish and loneliness he is going through greatly colours his perception of the world and his place in it.’

Below Average Responses

‘D’ range responses were primarily character-driven, answering the question through discussion of Hamlet’s character with little explicit language discussion and little direct exploration of Hamlet’s perception of the world and his place in it. Responses tended to demonstrate a simplistic knowledge of the play and Hamlet’s character with some awkwardness of expression at times. Answers often were based on the set passage with little exploration of the language of the play as a whole. The explicit language comment was often generalised, inaccurate or confused. Quotation unsupported by comment or analysis was commonly used as a substitute for language discussion. Quotation was not always accurate.

Typical ‘D’ Range Response

The following script is typical of the ‘D’ range response. It attempts to answer the question through discussion of Hamlet’s character but does little to directly address Hamlet’s perception of the world and his place in it. The expression is sound but simple and occasionally awkward; and an insufficient vehicle for complex ideas. Many of the quotations used are a little inaccurate. The discussion of the language is mostly general and when specific, not well argued.

‘In the play ‘Hamlet’ the main character changes and his perceptions change also. He is thrown into a world of corruption after the death of his father and he is asked to do unspeakable acts, by all around him. In the passage many feelings of Hamlet’s are presented. In the beginning of the passage he is talking about suicide. He wants to leave the world but he wants to do it with no effort on his part. He just wants to sink into the ground and go peacefully. He then realises that he cannot do it because God condemns suicide and he will not go to heaven. In these first few lines Hamlet is engulfed in self pity. He sees no reason to live. He sees no meaning in his being on earth and he wants to end it all. He is still mourning the death of his father and he is feeling very sorry for himself. He also talks about the corruption which is around him. ‘unweeded garden’ and ‘Things rank and gross in nature’ imply that he is talking about the corruption that grows within the kingdom. He is saying that is getting out of control. This is true for the rest of the play. Corruption is a major theme in the book and Hamlet is aware of it right from the beginning. It is corruption that brings about the demise of King Claudius and his followers.

Hamlet then goes on to talk about his mother, the queen, Gertrude. He is mad at her for getting married so soon after her husband’s death. He treats her as some kind of vulture that has to feed her own sexual appetite. He uses words such as ‘fed’ and ‘appetite’ to describe his mother. Hamlet lost faith in his mother and this in turn caused him to have a general distrust for all women. This could be why he ultimately rejected Ophelia. He calls Ophelia a liar and a whore and tells her ‘get thy to a nunnery’.

He is mad at his mother for, after only two months, marrying her brother in law. Back in these

times it was seen as incestuous. He is saying that she wept for her late husband but that soon passed and she got married again. Hamlet feels alone and he is mad at his mother for having so much disrespect for her late husband. She tells Hamlet to 'throw thy knighted colours off' and to stop mourning old Hamlet because all things must die and you cannot dwell on it for ever.

Hamlet is drawn into the world of corruption by the death of his father. He later discovers that the death of his father was caused by the hands of Claudius the new king. This gets Hamlet even more involved because he wants to avenge the death of his father by killing Claudius. The appearance of the ghost forces Hamlet to put on an 'antic disposition' in order to hide his feelings and to kill Claudius. Behind the cloak of madness he can do or say anything because people put it down as madness. Claudius says 'madness in great ones should not go un-noticed'. This is significant because it is Hamlet's supposed madness that brings about Claudius' downfall. Hamlet is a smart character who constantly outwits and outsmarts most of the other characters. He plays mind games with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and with Polonius. He calls Polonius a 'fishmonger' which is significant because it also means something. A fishmongers daughter is a whore so he is saying that Ophelia is a whore. This is an example of the constant mind games he uses to outsmart the other characters. Another example is when he gets the truth out of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that they were actually sent for. The only person that Hamlet trusts is Horatio because he knows that Horatio has no hidden agenda.

A constant thread that runs through Hamlets soliloquies is that of suicide and revenge. He often talks of killing himself or killing someone else, mostly the king. His speeches become more urgent towards the end when he realises that he has to kill Claudius and that he has been wasting time. He mentions in one of his speeches that he is amazed at how the player can cry for Hecuba the Queen of Troy and he doesn't even know her. He says that if he did he would drown the stage in tears. Hamlet is very emotional and this is shown in his soliloquies.

Hamlet is a man who has been thrown into a world of corruption that causes him to do things he wouldn't normally do. He is an honest man that has to do deceitful things in order to get what he wants and to help others. He was a man that was told to avenge his fathers death and from then on he was dragged into the corruption. The only way he could do this was to appear mad.

Hamlet is a tragedy that contains corruption, revenge, death and many other elements. Denmark is a microcosm of corruption and Hamlet is just one of the characters that is drawn into the corruption by forces out of his control.'

The Marking Scheme

Scripts were marked on a 15 mark scale. All scripts were marked twice, independently, by different markers. Each script was identified as belonging to one of five literal ranges (A, B, C, D, E) in terms of its relationship to 'the average response' for that question, and then assigned a numerical mark as a refinement of the initial literal judgement. The primary judgement was of each script's relationship to 'average' but markers evolved a set of descriptions of the typical features of each literal category. These Marking Guidelines are set out below.

Marking Guidelines

A Range 15, 14, 13 — Well Above Average

These responses demonstrate sophisticated expression of a sustained thesis, approaching the question through the language of the play and its use by Shakespeare to convey Hamlet's perception of the world and his place in it. Some candidates seamlessly, but less obviously, present a clever and insightful thesis. The passage is usually used to support the candidate's broader thesis on the language of the play. Language discussion is usually explicit, analytical and not confined to a list of terms. The response may combine explicit with implicit language discussion. There is an awareness of Shakespeare shaping Hamlet's language and hence the audience's response. The discussion of Hamlet's 'perception and place' is insightful, sophisticated and well argued. Responses demonstrate an awareness that Hamlet's perception of the world is not necessarily static. Quotation is well integrated, appropriate and used to support the thesis.

B Range 12, 11, 10 — Above Average

In these responses the question may be approached through the language of the play but often Hamlet's 'perception and place' are the primary focus with this discussion supported by explicit language discussion. Discussion is analytical in the higher part of the range but descriptive in the lower. Expression is well controlled and knowledge and discussion of the character of Hamlet are quite sophisticated. Language discussion is often tied heavily to the passage with some movement outward to the language of the play and other examples of corruption images, sexual images, misogyny references, classical allusions, god-like references to Old Hamlet etc. Language discussion may well go beyond discussion of imagery to tone and syntax.

C Range 9, 8, 7 — Average

In these responses the question is usually approached through a discussion of Hamlet's 'perception and place' and how language demonstrates this. There may be some focus on Hamlet's language rather than Shakespeare's. Expression is usually sound and discussion of Hamlet as a character is competent but limited. Discussion of language is sometimes in generalisations unsupported by detailed reference or appropriate quotation. Sometimes quotation is used as a substitute for discussion of language. Language analysis is often limited to further examples of particular images. Discussion of language may well be confined to the passage with limited expansion to the play as a whole. Discussion of language may largely consist of labelling.

Implicit discussion of language with flashes of explicit or direct discussion of language devices is common. Responses tend to be explanatory and descriptive rather than analytical.

D Range 6, 5, 4 — Below Average

In these responses the question is approached primarily through the character of Hamlet and is more a character study than a firm discussion of Hamlet's 'perception and place'. Language discussion is not analytical but weakly implicit or generalised or delivered using unfocused quotation. Discussion of the language is sometimes confined to the printed passage with little extended reference to the rest of the play. Knowledge of the play and character is often simplistic and expression is prone to awkwardness at times. Quotation is sometimes faulty. Fragmented structure of essays at the lower end is common or the essay may be quite unified in structure but fail to answer the question. Essays often make confused, inaccurate language comment.

E Range 3, 2, 1,0 — Well Below Average

These are most commonly brief or undeveloped responses which do not tackle language in any way other than implicitly or through quotation. Essays may be a series of points. The discussion of Hamlet's 'perception and place' is usually a simplistic character analysis with little evidence of insight into the complexities of the character.

ENGLISH PAPER 2

RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

SECTION I Common Questions for 2/3 Unit Common and 2 Unit General Candidates

Question 1: Poetry

‘Poetry makes nothing happen.’

What is the point of poetry? Discuss with reference to two poems, one from each of the two poets you have studied from the list below.

2 / 3 Unit Common Text List:

Geoffrey Chaucer

John Donne

John Keats

Robert Browning

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Seamus Heaney

Les Murray

Gwen Harwood

Robert Gray

Jennifer Maiden

Candidates' Responses

The stimulus quote enabled candidates to respond either affirmatively or negatively and there were excellent responses adopting either viewpoint. The best candidates wrote with thorough knowledge of the poetry and with considerable feeling for it. The very best responses integrated comprehensive discussion of the poetry with solid discussion of poetic technique. Candidates in the upper range were able to engage the question with articulate and thoughtful answers which were written with insight and with flair. Average responses often mentioned the question but frequently lost sight of it as they embarked on a 'prepared' analysis reflecting their knowledge of the poetry.

Weaker responses were typified by laboured expression and limited discussion of the question. A mere listing of techniques without consideration of effect was considered to be of little value. Despite an open choice of poems, some responses did not display a detailed knowledge of the poems chosen.

Candidates who achieved higher grades were able to incorporate discussion of the set poems with a sustained argument addressing the essay question. These responses were seen to be far more successful than a standard 'prepared answer'.

Overall, the responses reflected thorough preparation by candidates. The range of poems selected demonstrated the fact that candidates were well prepared, indicating their understanding that all set poems must be prepared for the HSC exam.

Dawe, Slessor and Wright were the most popular poets in 2 Unit General. It was pleasing to note the increasing number of responses to Gray and O'Connor. In the 2/3 Unit (Common) all of the set poets (with the exception of Chaucer and Maiden) were well represented. Many candidates genuinely seemed to enjoy the experience of writing about these poets.

1998 COMMON QUESTION CRITERIA GUIDELINES – POETRY

Answers may be characterised by some or all of these features.

A Range 15, 14, 13 — Well Above Average

- Well above average but not necessarily perfect
- Answer strongly focused on what is the point of poetry. This is demonstrated through the discussion of their chosen poems and their interpretation of the question
- Generally a sophisticated style and structure
- Often superior discussion / analysis of effects of language / imagery clearly linked to ideas
- Deals effectively with two poems — one may be stronger than the other
- Sustained discussion of the poems in answer to the question
- May be succinct
- Effective use of quotations
- May be an integrated approach making a coherent link between discussion of two poems to illustrate points made; or two 'mini essays'

- Interpretation of poetry displays insight and engagement
- May be comprehensive though not inspirational
- Discussion of the point of poetry may be implied or explicit

B Range 12, 11, 10 — Above Average

- Above average response which may have some flaws which restrict it to the 'B' range
- Engages with the question demonstrating an understanding of the point of poetry
- Proficient discussion / analysis of effects of language and imagery
- May be stronger on poem than the other
- May address the question in the introduction and conclusion but not really deal with it in the body of the essay
- Interpretation is supported by evidence drawn from the poems
- Detailed understanding of the ideas in the poems
- Appropriate choice and selective use of quotations
- Good expression with a more structured approach than 'C' range
- May be very detailed answer with mundane expression
- Deals with more than simply content
- Discussion of the point of poetry may be implied or explicit

C Range 9, 8, 7 — Average

- Competent understanding of the poems
- Acknowledges the question, but then loses sight of it in the discussion
- Competent, if pedestrian, approach; may be repetitive, regurgitating poems with some comments; persistent; laboured expression; some language problems
- Some discussion/analysis of effects of language and imagery
- Demonstrates an understanding of the ideas in the poems but it may be a superficial understanding
- May be stronger on one poem than the other
- Competent retelling
- At the top of the range the candidates may have an understanding of the poems and some understanding of what the point of poetry is

- A weaker C student may tend to tell a story but shows knowledge of the poems with some appropriate evidence
- May communicate ideas clearly but with flawed expression
- Some discussion of ideas and feelings without discussion of technique
- Discussion of the point of poetry may be implied or explicit

D Range 6, 5, 4 — Below Average

- Below average response
- Limited attempt to answer the question
- Excessive on recounting of content, storytelling, paraphrasing with no attempt to select salient points
- May mention techniques without further development
- Unsupported generalisations
- Limited understanding
- Ideas but poor expression
- Repetitive
- Simplistic ideas with little substantiation
- Misinterpretation
- May not be completed
- May be articulate but not enough content
- Problems with expression
- Discernible padding
- Has limited grasp of the point of poetry
- Discussion of the point of poetry may be implied or explicit

E Range 3, 2, 1, 0 — Well Below Average

- Well below average response
- Little relevance to question
- Discussion not substantiated, unsupported generalisations
- Irrelevant discussion
- Serious misunderstanding or lack of understanding of poems

- May be a general discussion about the question but with little or no reference to the poems
- Poor expression
- Inadequate treatment of poem(s)
- Significant gaps in understanding
- May be very short or incomplete

'0' mark says nothing worthwhile pertaining to the question.

'00' is awarded for a non attempt, a blank page or the words 'Not attempted' may appear on the script. Record as per marking procedure.

A candidate who answers only one poet will score no higher than the 'C' range but may reach C 8.

If a candidate attempts more than one poem from each poet, read the whole script but count only the best poem discussed from each poet.

Above Average Responses (A and B Range)

The means to achieve this grade range for the common poetry varied. Some responses were both concise and precise while others were characterised by extensive discussion which was thorough and insightful. All demonstrated apt selection of material which was well suited to the candidates' argument, reflecting both depth and breadth of understanding.

Above average responses were characterised by an insightful discussion of the chosen poems. They focused on what the point of poetry was through the analysis of effects of poetic language. The best responses demonstrated a superior and sustained discussion of poetic technique clearly linked to ideas or issues.

Most of the above average candidates provided proficient and integrated analysis of poems; the most outstanding displayed flair and fluency. Often the discussion of the point of poetry was subtle or implied.

Typical 'A' Range Response

'Poetry is one of the most powerful mediums through which we, as humans, are able to catch and preserve the past. In this painfully transient world, where Time is the ultimate arbitrator poetry allow us to store memories of past moments which can be either of personal or public historical importance. By translating feelings and emotions (which are usually so intangible and fleeting) into structured, patterned poetic artifacts, both Heaney and Harwood transcend the transience of human experience and immortalise a past moment. Harwood is concerned more with capturing the memory of her own past to defy 'death's disorientating scale', while Heaney uses poetry as a means of 'restoring the culture of the country to itself by writing about past moments in the history of Northern Ireland which have huge bearing on the national consciousness of the people.'

In *The Violets*, Harwood explores the power of poetry as a means of preserving the ‘lamplit presences’ of her early childhood. The speaker in the poem, by the last stanza, has realised the significance of memory and by translating that highly personal experience into a structured poem, those memories are preserved. Thus the poem itself plays a role in bringing back Harwood in intimate recollections of a past time: the structure of the poem (with the indented passages visibly marking the transition to the past) reveals an interplay between past and present which the medium of poetry has facilitated. The poem has an intimate tone, created by the use of the first person, the use of enjambement between lines and stanzas (which means the poem has a flowing feel to it) and the highly personal subject matter: a childhood recollection. Each stanza has a slightly different definite rhyme scheme, yet it is significant that each rhyming word at the end of the line has a ‘partner’ within the same stanza; which contributes to the sense of calm and continuity which the poem evokes. At first, the speaker’s tone is depressed and melancholy, suggested by the short, simple sentence which creates the milieu: ‘It is dark, and cold’. The transferred epithets ‘frail, melancholy flowers’ suggest it is the speaker who is feeling depressed, and the references to death and finality (‘ashes and loam’) contribute to this atmosphere of loneliness.

Yet already in the first stanza there is a suggestion of the speaker moving back in time, with the simile of ‘The melting west is striped like ice-cream’. The transition from present to past is flowing and easy: the repetition of ‘ambiguous light. Ambiguous sky’ and the indent enable the reader to move easily with the speaker to a past time. The word ‘ambiguous’ reveals the speaker’s ambivalence: the light and sky and the scent of the violets belongs to two times – both present and past. While the speaker is feeling a sense of loss in the first stanza, that time has reclaimed memory, the ambiguity is that those past moments are still there – the memories are present, not absent, and by putting them down in a poem, she is able to capture them and to realise that memories are what we have, not what we have lost.

The speaker moves from first person narrative to moments of distance from herself as a child: for example, ‘young parents and their restless child’ as they go ‘into my father’s house’ (the inverted sentence reinforcing the safety and idyllic harmony of the close family). The warmth of that past time is conveyed through phrase such as ‘to light the lamp’ (the ‘l’ alliteration has a gentle, lolling, comforting rhythm to it) and the use of words such as ‘surrendered’ ‘reconciled’ and ‘innocent’. The crux of the child’s loss as she sobs: ‘where’s morning gone’ echoes that of the adult’s lament of her ‘lost’ childhood. The direct speech gives it an immediacy and represents the child’s premature, partial grasp of the passage of time.

Yet in the last stanza, the poet comes to realise that she still has those memories and ‘lamplit presences’. Just as the child was reconciled by ‘milk and storybook’, the adult is pacified by the knowledge that ‘death’s disorientating scale’ (the ‘d’ alliteration giving a sense of the inexorable passage of time) cannot distort her memories: hence she is reconciled by the ‘storybook’ of memory – which can be accessed through her poetry. Thus the speaker ends the poem in a positive note, ambiguously mixing past and present with the present tense in ‘faint scent of violets drifts in air’, concluding with the realisation of the power of poetry to recapture and store memories.

In *Requiem for the Croppies*, Heaney’s focus is more on the importance of poetry in restoring the culture and history of his country to the people, and to emphasise the ongoing cycle of regeneration and renewal in the face of the everyday sectarian violence. By writing this poem in sonnet form, with fourteen lines and a strict abab cdcd efefef rhyme scheme, Heaney captures the importance of the 1878 uprising of the Croppies: the formal structure and religious allusions (‘Requiem’; ‘conclave’) give the poem a serious tone, while the irregular rhythm, enjambement and imperfect

rhyme ('day'; 'infantry') ensure that the poem is told through the Croppies' consciousness, as if by one of the people. This combination of sophisticated language and the people's language is evidenced in the title: while 'Requiem' has important, formal religious connotations, 'croppies' was the colloquial name given to the rebel fighters.

Heaney is conscious of how he tells the story in the people's terms, and also of how he emphasises the link between people and the landscape. He uses natural imagery to describe the massacre of the croppies in the sestet, which both removes some of the horror of the slaughter while emphasising the link the people had with the land: 'Terraced thousands died, shaking scythe at cannon. The hillside blushed, soaked in their broken wave'. He also shows how the land nourished and sustained them ('the pockets of our great coats full of barley') and in the end gave them the living memorial denied them by their enemies: 'and in August the barley grew up out of the grave'). The solidarity of the people is made reference to throughout: for example 'A people' (the singular, indefinite article highlights their togetherness); 'Terraced thousands died' and 'their broken wave'. The water and blood imagery of 'wave' and 'soaked' suggests the oneness of the people, yet also the great shame that they felt in the face of such futile bloodshed. The volta in line ten (which is built up to the octave), slows down the rhythm of the poem and focusses attention on the references to Vinegar Hill, which the people of Ireland would recognise as a place of historical importance. The juxtaposition of two incongruent terms, 'total' and 'conclave' holds the ambiguity of the slaughter: while Heaney suggests that the deaths were not futile in that the 'barley grew up out of the grave', the word 'fatal' suggests that the cycle of vengeance and violence could also be ongoing, which has dire consequence for the people of Northern Ireland.

Thus in both *The Violets* and *Requiem for the Croppies*, the respective poets use poetry as a means of recapturing and immortalising either a personal memory, or one of historical importance. By translating a past moment in time into a structured poem, they show that poetry indeed, does make something happen: it has the power to remember and preserve the past, which is something that humans always yearn to do.'

Examiner's Comments

Perceptive analysis of the chosen poems with superior essay technique. This candidate integrates discussion with intelligent analysis of poetic devices. Quoting is brief, pertinent, and accurate. Thorough and intelligent argument is complemented by sophisticated style and structure.

Typical 'B' Range Response 1

'The statement 'Poetry makes nothing happen' is certainly not true, it has a point and we see that this is evident in Bruce Dawe and Robert Gray's poems. Bruce Dawe in 'Enter Without So Much as Knocking' brings us to question our meaning in existence, make us aware of the shallowness of modern life as he sees it and to entertain with humours as well as insight. Robert Gray's 'Late Ferry' also brings us to see the point of poetry with his images, presenting the fragility of life we gain and are asked to appreciate detail and the beauty of nature.

In 'Late Ferry' Gray frameshots a journey in which 'he makes everything happen'; the scene is set and feelings are stirred as we feel a sadness and loss for the ferry leaving 'this small tubenous bay for the big city'. Here Gray opens our eyes to see the point of poetry and providing us to see his personal insight to the familiar precious moment of watching the ferry, we see the image's meaning to him.

From the beginning of the poem a scene is set, his point to engage and focus the reader. The statement 'going up onto the huge dark harbour' conjours feelings of a daunting journey, presenting the dark harbour to be something menacing and unknown and a sympathy is created. Gray also uses imagery to create an atmosphere, 'palm tree tops touching like the brush on a snare drum'. At this point poetry creates a strong image and feeling, we can almost hear the wind in the trees from the offshore breeze of the water.

Alliteration in the 's' sounds of 'swishing' also helps to create the image of such an atmosphere but it also adds to the peace of the silent onlooker, Gray watching the ferry leave.

The simile of 'like hands after the light switch' re-enforce the nervous feeling of the little ferry going out to face the city, its fragility. Poetry here gives an insight to an image we may have overlooked and in Gray's 'painting with words' he makes us aware.

The statement 'and it looks like honeycomb' in the second last line reveals the true essence of the ferry and how Gray feels about it. Honeycomb is something rich in colour and flavour like the ferry with its familiar and comforting yellow light. It is a contrast to the 'silver blizzard', 'powerful lights in the city'. Honeycomb is something desirable which brings us to share this precious moment with him, a transient moment. This image also makes the point of the fragility of the ferry, it is leaving the 'narrow wood jetty'. Bruce Dawe's 'Enter Without So Much as Knocking' definitely is evident of poetry having a point in his negative and satirised view of modern society. His poetry makes us question our own life, how we live it and the meaning of our existence. The first Latin sentence of 'remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return' creates the feeling of hopelessness and the emptiness and meaningless in our lives.

In the first stanza the use of short words of 'Blink blink, hospital silence', highlights the simplicity of the beginning of life. The use of capitals in such words eccentuate them and engage our attention. We are thrown into the first stanza with the announcement of 'Bobby Dazzler on Channel 7' and the statement 'lucky...' lucky because it didn't mean a thing to him then. This image of Bobby Dazzler on TV sets the scene of the commercialism and tackyness of modern society and the repetition of 'lucky' which we hear again in the third stanza points out that life is just chance.

In this poem Dawe places a strong emphasis on materialism, commercialism and advertising, suggesting that this is what modern society is really all about, but it also makes us question and look at our own lives to see if this is the case. In his description of the family 'well equipt smoothly run household, one economy sized mum and one Anthony Squires Coolstream summerweight Dad' we see this point of his poetry but the point is also made that there is little individuality in our modern world, is there just no room for it.

This description is its alliteration of the 's' sounds captures the smooth sound, as if being read out by a radio or TV announcer. The repetition of 'beep' in the third stanza and other hypocritical signs and instructions brings us to see the baseness and restrictions put on our everyday life. This repetition of such instructions at the end of the poem give a sense of unity and re-enforce the point of such restrictions taking over life.

Even the title of the poem suggests we have no choice into entering this world and Bruce Dawe strongly emphasises this.

Dawe's point in this poem highlights life as a rat race he says 'kick whoever's down, remember its number one everytime' and we see in the 4th stanza how we have little time to stop and take in the beauty of nature and to really think. Dawe creates such an effect by slowing down the pace with the word 'However' and a statement 'littered with stains'. This suggests that unlike the rest of the modern world they were natural and untainted by restrictions and modernism.

The repetition of the word 'kicked' reinforces the harshness of reality which Dawe brings us to see.

Dawe makes a strong use of satire to entertain, we laugh at the description of the family but also we see his point of the shallowness of our existence is made very clear by such exaggeration.

The final stanza we see his poetry to convey a point of a very negative society describing, that person by stating 'old automatic smile with nothing behind it' what is our purpose if we have no time for meaningful relationships?

Examiner's Comments

This is a proficient response addressing the question with well supported evidence while demonstrating an understanding of the point of poetry. Although it does not have the control of language to get into the 'A' range, it deals thoroughly with ideas and techniques. A detailed understanding of the effects of language and imagery was a characteristic of above average scripts.

Typical 'B' Range Response 2

'The point of poetry is to examine aspects of life in a more condensed and poignant method than that in blank verse. This is evident in the poets of Robert Browning and Les Murray, and their poems, 'Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister' and 'Widower in the Country', respectively.

Poetry presents humans in a different perspective, often at a point of crisis or revelation. This is so in 'Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister' in the presentation of a monk who feels immense hatred for a fellow monk, 'Brother Lawrence'. Poetry captures the monk's hatred in the opening line, 'Grrr , there goes my heart's abhorrence...'. Poetry aims in this instance to make pleasing to the reader, what is distasteful to the monk.

The poetry of Robert Browning is intended to grasp the complexities of the human psyche and examine the tendencies of humans to be eccentric. Irony is in the poem, as through the monk's revelations of Brother Lawrence's habits, the reader is able to perceive him as quite humble and kind. For example, 'What's the 'Latin' name for parsley?'. This innocent question is returned with a most cruel aside of 'What's the Greek name for Swine's snout?'. Poetry therefore, is able to explicitly examine the psychological balance in mind of this monk and it is done effectively through Browning's dramatic monologue.

Poetry, with the aid of the dramatic monologue is successful in delving into the mind of the speaker. This is achieved through the asides and parenthesis. '(He he there his lily snaps)', this quote further emphasises that the monk himself has the problem and not Brother Lawrence.

Poetry also gives the reader a flow in the ideas of the characters (or speaker). The even rhythm and rhyme create a lyrical quality that cannot be matched in normal blank verse. The creative flow creates action and thereby makes things happen. As in, ‘...(I) drink three sips...(he) at one gulp...’. This stanza has a lyrical quality in which action succinctly takes place.

Poetry also allows or more of the reader’s senses to be alerted and touched. The onomatopoeia of the last stanza with words such as ‘st-‘ (hissing) ‘Sanchida’, ‘Vespers’ all create a serpentine image of the monk ‘spitting’ out his words. This alerts the reader to the sounds and enforces the point that poetry grasps at the senses to make the themes of hate and death in the monastery more vivid.

Les Murray’s , ‘The Widower in the Country’ is a poem that explores the day of a widow, whose life has been rendered worthless. Poetry in this sense creates empathy for the man and thereby humans who’ve experienced loss. Whilst the man may seem to have no point in life, poetry through imagery makes the reader come to the conclusion on their own without a long dramatic story.

The poem captures the essence of what the man’s life has become, ‘and leave my bed unmade’ and ‘for I get up late now’. Murray’s poetry is remarkable more for what isn’t said than what is. From this line, the reader can see that he has no need to conform to any sort of domesticity.

The poem also has a sense of despair. The speaker uses the personal ‘I’ throughout which increases the sense of his aloneness. The simple use of different techniques in poetry can change the whole context of the poem and enforce the point of it making aware to the reader that there is more to the poem than what is plaintively written.

The use of imagery in poetry is effective in also conveying the man’s grief and pain. ‘Xmas paddocks aching in the heat’ exemplifies how nature reflects human emotions. It is made even more poignant with the reference to the festive (‘Xmas’) season, which he has no reason or desire to be so.

Poetry also has the effect, through its structure of creating the long drawn out day that the man endures. The stanzas increase in length as they proceed through his day. Poetry makes action take place with visual images ‘moonlit’ ‘claws’ ‘screaming’, ‘ski-ing’. The use of particular words allow for poetry to become enlightening and also complex, the latter requiring the reader’s insight and imagination.

Therefore, poetry does make things or action ‘happen’ through the use of imagery, unpleasing characters, dramatic monologues, and specific language techniques. These all make poetry achieve its aim of entertaining, enlightening, perplexing and intriguing readers into stories that are more pleasing to read due to their sometimes lyrical qualities.’

Examiner’s Comments

This response is fluent and articulate. It engages with the question. While a sound and well supported analysis of poetic technique was pursued confidently, the level of discussion of themes and ideas kept this response out of the A range.

Average Responses (C Range)

This range was characterised by an adequate understanding of the poems. At the top of the range responses were characterised by an understanding of the poems and some understanding of the point of poetry.

Weaker scripts in the average range tended to retell storylines while demonstrating knowledge of the poems with some appropriate evidence.

Average responses often selected limited material which was then used to assert, rather than argue a position.

Typical 'C' Range Response

'Although dramatically different in their approach, stemming particularly from the difference in time periods and presentation of ideas, both John Keats and John Donne ultimately convey the same message about the human experience. Through their poems it is not 'nothing' that happens, their utilisation of feelings, thoughts and emotions allows the reader to experience more deeply their own existence.

John Keats words, 'O for a life of sensations rather than thoughts' is the point of his poetry. His theory of negative capability whereby through imagination one escapes reality and achieves permanence and perfection is particularly evident in his poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. In the poem, Keats does not want us to merely read and think about the poem, but experience it, therefore destroying the notion that 'poetry makes nothing happen'.

His sensuous imagery used in his quest to join with the bird allows us to feel all the thoughts and emotions Keats has throughout the poem and leave us also questioning 'was it a vision or a waking dream?'. Although Keats and ourselves are unable to physically attain the permanence symbolised by the nightingale, we are able to join with Keats via the 'viewless wings of poetry' and experience the same sadness and joy that he is writing of.

If Keats was 'sensations', Donne must be referred to as 'thoughts'. Through his practical, argumentative approach which corresponded with the age of exploration and presentation of new ideas that was occurring at the time, Donne ensures that poetry does not mean nothing. In his work, *Valediction: Forbidden Mourning* he employs the use of geology, geographical exploration, astronomy and biblical references to connect the reader to his feelings.

Although the subject of Donne's poem does not farewell his wife with 'sigh-floods and tempests' an expression linked to the 'sensations' of Keats and the romantic poets, Donne is still able to convey a message of the 'human experience' as we marvel at his intellect throughout the poem.

Donne is pedantic in his use of the circular symbol throughout the poem. By linking gold, which had the medieval symbol of a circle with a dot in the centre of it, to a wedding ring, the sun, the solar patterns of the celestials and finally culminating in the famous metaphor of love being like two compasses, Donne's common thread has allowed the reader to feel the departure. Although his argumentative approach has not allowed sorrow, we still marvel at the love between the subject and his wife, such that he shall return to complete the journey she becomes the 'fixed foot'.

Thus Keats poem of wishing for the attainment of perfection and permanence and Donne's poem of love and farewell, although dramatically different in design, lead us to think more deeply about the human experience. The joining of Keats' 'sensations' and Donne's 'thoughts' span time periods to write in one common goal.

This goal is as relevant today as it was in the ages of romantic and renaissance poetry. Poetry exists to provide insight to ourselves, be it through the 'sensations' of Keats or 'thoughts' of Donne. This common goal is the point of poetry, allowing us to experience melancholy or joy. It is through the common goal that we may realise that poetry does not merely 'make nothing happen' but allows the reader, if they so desire, to look into their soul and be left intrigued, enlightened, or merely questioning.'

Examiner's Comments

This average range response engages the question through a sophisticated, but thinly supported argument. This script displays an implicit understanding of the question. The analysis of Donne's poetry demonstrates a clear understanding of the circle imagery in a succinct manner. The discussion of Keats' poetry is limited but displays a succinct knowledge of negative capability and the metaphysics of the poetry.

Typical 'C' Range Response

'Poetry shows us a new perspective of the world and reveal a poet's thoughts and feelings. By studying the poems 'Enter without so much as Knocking' by Bruce Dawe and 'Pozieres Cemetery' by Mark O'Connor, it is proven that this statement is false.

'Enter without so much as Knocking' follows a man from birth, 'Blink. Blink. Hospital. Silence', to death 'Blink. Blink. Cemetery. Silence', showing how he changes under the forces of conformity which strip him of his innocence and reduce him to the sort of hypocritical so and so that surround him. From the very beginning, as a very young child, he is already exposed to advertising and 'Bobby Dazzler on channel seven'. We can see Dawe's disdain for television as he assets the baby with 'he was really lucky cause he didn't understand a word he was saying'. From the life of this man, we see Dawe's purpose in writing this poem which is to show the stifling, restrictive nature of urban society. But there is a glimmer of hope for this man. While watching acts of 'monstrous love' at the drive in, his attention drifts to the 'stars' and nature, stars represent freedom and one of the few things 'man hasn't fixed up yet'. This act of regeneration doesn't last long as soon it was 'goodbye stars' and to the 'soft cry is the corner when no-one was looking'. The man reverts back to the materialistic life he was leading before. We see the man's life come to an abrupt end in a tragic car accident but the lies continue on. Ironically, the martician's name is 'Probity' who gives him a 'colour he never had'. Even the man is 'six feet down nobody interested'. As was said in the epigram 'Dust to Dust', this man's life has amount to nothing. Through this poem Dawe delivers a strong warning to society, hoping to convert our foolish ways.

'Pozieres Cemetery' by Mark O'Connor focuses on a World War I graveyard as its central image to dispel the 'recycling myths' that war is gloryfying and exciting. O'Connor uses morbid humour, 'the earth for centuries will show dark greasiness', greasiness representing the fat from the dead corpses, the shock the reader and to discourage war. From the list of names, 'Hagor,

Brown-Jones', we see that the soldiers were just ordinary young men. This list coupled with the body parts 'fingers a clinking heap' show the huge loss of life, the futility of war and its horrifying reality. Towards the conclusion of the poem, 'two old men hobble down the rows' remembering the young men they once knew. 'Honour and folly holds the ground', showing the senselessness of war as honour has no use for the dead.

From the study of the poems 'Enter without so much as Knocking' and 'Pozières Cemetery' we are shown the realities of the world. 'Poetry makes nothing happen' is a totally untrue statement as can be seen. The ideas of Dawe and O'Connor and clearly expressed providing a purpose and 'point' to their poetry. The work of these poets truly is great.'

Examiner's Comments

This response demonstrates a competent understanding of the poems. Although brief, the candidate makes a consistent attempt to address the question.

Below Average Responses (D and E Range)

Weaker responses were typified by a simplistic and, at times, literal discussion of the poetry, often ignoring the question or engaging it in the most limited way. Poor expression and misinterpretation were also characteristic of responses in this range.

Question 2: Fiction

'In every work of fiction there is a crucial moment of understanding for the reader'.

Choose what you see as an important moment in EACH of the TWO works of fiction that you have studied from the list below. Show why these two moments are so crucial to your understanding.

2 / 3 Unit Common Text List:

Jane Austen, Emma

Charles Dickens, Great Expectations

George Eliot, Adam Bede

Henry James, Washington Square

Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles

Henry Lawson, Short Stories

Graham Greene, Brighton Rock

Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women

Michael Ondaatje, In the Skin of a Lion

Patrick White, The Tree of Man

David Malouf, The Great World

Peter Goldsworthy, Maestro

Gillian Mears, Fineflour

Jessica Anderson, Tirra Lirra by the River

General Comments

The Common Fiction question allowed students who knew their texts and were able to relate that knowledge to the question, to achieve their potential. The question was seen as a good discriminator with the focus on 'the reader's' understanding being a key feature.

The question was accessible to all candidates. The question's focus on two moments tended to anchor the responses of capable candidates and helped students to structure their essays more coherently.

Candidates' Responses

Strengths:

- Most candidates were able to identify two crucial moments.
- Candidates on the whole produced balanced answers, demonstrated a thorough knowledge of their texts, and were able to select their supporting evidence appropriately.
- Most candidates demonstrated skilful and appropriate use of quotations that were incorporated into a meaningful discussion.
- Students wrote substantially and generally displayed sound writing skills which showed their understanding of plot, character, themes, narrative structure and stylistic features.
- Most candidates successfully handled the common question requirement of writing on two texts in one essay. The majority of candidates had been prepared well and chose to write two framed mini-essays with integrated points in the introduction and the conclusion. Some more able candidates successfully used an integrated approach, however, many others disadvantaged themselves by adopting this approach unsuccessfully.
- The majority of candidates recognised that the question did not ask for a comparison of the texts.

Concerns:

- A disturbing feature was the number of able students who ignored the question or presented a generalised or prepared response.
- A significant number of candidates failed to understand what the question demanded and could not focus on one moment. Such candidates often found security in presenting an overview of the plot as their response to the question.
- Where students attempted to compare the texts they almost invariably lost sight of the question.

1998 COMMON QUESTION CRITERIA GUIDELINES — FICTION

There are many valid and acceptable ways of answering this question and therefore the approach selected should not be viewed as a discriminating aspect in itself.

A Range 15, 14, 13 — Well Above Average

- Clearly identifies the crucial moments in both texts and engage in close, detailed discussion of the crucial moments.
- Presents a well articulated exploration of the crucial moments and why they are important to the reader's understanding of both texts.
- Offers perceptive insights and understanding of the importance of the crucial moments in both texts.
- Demonstrates a perceptive, analytical and comprehensive knowledge of the texts in relation to the question. Expresses ideas clearly and fluently.
- Provides specific and relevant supporting detail and where quotes are used they are effectively integrated into the discussion.
- May be written with flair and sophistication.

B Range 12, 11, 10 — Above Average

- Clearly identifies a crucial moment from each text and discuss it in relation to the reader's understanding of the relevant text.
- Demonstrates an awareness of what the reader understands as distinct from the character understands.
- Demonstrates a sound and detailed knowledge knowledge of both texts in relation to the question.
- Offers a sustained and often perceptive response to the question and will go beyond a plot analysis.
- Includes supporting detail which is likely to be both appropriate and effectively used.
- Although generally quite fluent, may be plodding in their thoroughness.

C Range 9, 8, 7 — Average

- Identifies and attempts to explore the crucial moments.
- May have less clearly defined moments or take a broader perspective.
- Shows evidence of an attempt to justify the importance of the two moments selected.

- Demonstrates a reasonable knowledge of both texts but may include some inaccuracies of interpretation. Text knowledge may be more descriptive than insightful and may present a limited view of the importance of the crucial moment. May be more preoccupied with outlining the importance of the moment to the plot for the reader, and/or the importance of the moment for the insights gained by the characters.
- May have a storytelling approach or a personal response while still attempting to focus on the question.
- The approach, while generally balanced, may be stronger on one text.
- The attempt to explain the importance of the moment may be simplistic.
- May be pedestrian and/or repetitive with occasional lapses into irrelevancy.

D Range 6, 5, 4 — Below Average

- Often depends upon a story telling approach to answering the question.
- Often offers simplistic views. Some responses may be comparatively brief while others may be quite long and verbose.
- Contains inaccuracies or misunderstandings and is usually only loosely linked to the question.
- May be confused about what constitutes a crucial moment and why it helps the reader's understanding. May not understand the notion of a crucial moment.
- The discussion is likely to be vague, poorly supported and may be stronger on one text.
- The imbalance factor may be more pronounced in this range.

E Range 3, 2, 1 — Well Below Average

- May appear to be discussing the question but does not necessarily link the discussion to the texts. The response most likely reflects a poor understanding of the question or the text(s).
- Brevity of response may be a characteristic. Supporting detail is likely to be inappropriate or miss the point. Responses tend to be unstructured.

E Range 0 — Well Below Average

- Completely irrelevant, inaccurate comments on one or both texts. May identify a moment but do nothing more.

Note: it is anticipated that a response to only one text will not be awarded more than eight marks. Any troublesome or single text scripts need to be brought to the attention of senior markers.

2 Unit Related scripts: any Lawson scripts not dealing with at least ONE of the Joe Wilson stories must be brought to the attention of senior markers.

The guidelines are not a checklist, but rather a guide for making an objective holistic assessment. There are many valid and acceptable ways of answering this question and therefore the approach selected should not be viewed as a discriminating aspect in itself.

Above Average Responses (A and B Range)

These responses were characterised by an ability to identify and discuss a crucial moment in both texts and explore why they are important to the reader's understanding of them. They were more sophisticated in style and structure, were fluent in expression and showed a superior analysis of text.

For example, the following introduction identifies two crucial moments, highlighting the importance of the moments to the reader:

In the novels *Maestro* and *The Color Purple* by Peter Goldsworthy and Alice Walker (respectively) there are crucial moments in the text which are important to the understanding of the reader. In *The Color Purple* it is a crucial moment for the understanding of the reader (and for Celie herself) when she has her first sexual experience with Shug Avery. This moment is crucial as it is a turning point in Celie's development and links to many of the themes in the text. Similarly, in the novel *Maestro* a crucial moment occurs in a scene which the central character (Paul) describes as 'a confessional', where Keller enlightens Paul on his past and the reader gains an understanding of the father/son bond that has been established between them and demonstrates Keller's affections for Paul and Paul's development. *Maestro* and *The Colour Purple* contain scenes which are crucial moments not only for the characters, but for the understanding for the reader.

The best responses incorporated a detailed analysis of the moment offering perceptive insights and understanding in relation to the development of theme and character. The reader's response was at all times integral to the discussion:

It is this moment which proves to be the most crucial in this novel as this 'virginal daughter of nature' who was simply 'doomed to be seen and coveted that day by the wrong man' finally has taken action after years of indecisiveness and passivity. The reader finally loses all hopes of a happy ending as the line 'It was meant to be. There lay the pity of it' is left ringing in their minds. Tess, 'caught up living her days of immaturity like a bird in a spinney' would never experience a true fulfilling relationship with Angel, her ideal of masculine perfection.

The following conclusion shows the ability to succinctly and perceptively draw the issues and question together:

The crucial moment of Emma therefore, at the point where Mr Knightley reveals his feelings for Emma is crucial to the reader's understanding of the novel's sequence, the misperception and true nature of character and the crucial nature of Mr Knightley's role in Emma's world. The crucial moment for the reader in *Tess of the d'Urberville's* confirms for the reader the sense of tragic circumstance, the understanding that Tess is a victim of society, the reason why Tess too readily accepts death and the reason for the foreboding nature of the narrative.

Average Responses (C Range)

Candidates in this range identified and attempted to explore the crucial moments in both texts. The responses tended to focus on plot, character or a listing of the themes, rather than on the reader. In their attempt to justify the importance of their chosen moment, the C Range candidate focussed on recount rather than on analysis. The chosen moment was less precise and appropriate than the A / B range.

The following introduction illustrates this point:

In every work of fiction there is a crucial moment of understanding for the reader. Maestro and The Great Gatsby both adequately demonstrate this point. The crucial moment in Maestro is when Paul visits Henisch in Vienna, while the crucial moment in The Great Gatsby is the death of Myrtle Wilson. Both of these incidents help the reader to gain an understanding of all of the happenings leading up to the crucial moment.

Essays often discussed the plot and characters without making a sustained link to the crucial moment.

Below Average Responses (D and E Range)

The D Range script was characterised by a poor conception of what were two crucial moments. Students often depended on storytelling or prepared responses on characterisation or themes with no link to the question. Responses were frequently confused and were unable to adapt their knowledge of the text to the question. The reader was either ignored or mentioned briefly as an afterthought.

The introduction to this D range response typically fails to clearly identify moments and come to terms with the specific nature of the question as in the following introduction:

In the two fictions that I studied this year it was the crucial moments that not only did you understand the story itself but you understood the characters for what they truly were.

'The Colour Purple' and the 'Great Gatsby' both have the very important turning points to the novel. It was the crucial moments that help me understand the relationships and interaction of the main characters with characters around them.

Question 3. Drama

'The characters in plays have to be interesting to the audience'.

Choose two plays that you have studied from the list below. What techniques do you think the playwrights have used to catch and hold our interest in the characters?

2/3 Unit Common Text List:

William Shakespeare, Measure for Measure

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, The School for Scandal

Henrik Ibsen, A Doll's House

Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead

Dylan Thomas, Under Milk Wood

Dorothy Hewett, The Man from Mukinupin

Caryl Churchill, Top Girls

Louis Nowra, Così

Katherine Thomson, Diving for Pearls

General Comments

This was a demanding question which required candidates to relate dramatic techniques to the presentation of characters in two plays. It also required the candidates to demonstrate an understanding of a sense of audience.

Candidates' Responses

Most candidates showed a sound understanding of texts and were able to address at least some elements of the question. Only the more capable candidates were able to integrate their knowledge of techniques and relate this to the 'catch and hold' aspect of the question. Weaker candidates tended towards character studies with only tenuous links to the focus of the question. A significant number of students discussed how the play captured the audience's interest rather than focusing on the character. Some students seemed to have prepared answers, particularly on 'conflict' and 'themes'.

There was a wide range of dramatic techniques that was accepted (see the guidelines). It was disappointing that even capable candidates who were able to articulate perceptive comments on the thematic concerns of the plays struggled with addressing the theatrical requirements of this question.

Texts Studied

Fewer students attempted the Common Drama question in both the 2 Unit (Related) and 2 Unit (General) courses than the other options.

The most popular (2 Unit (Related)) texts were a combination of *Così* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. *The Man from Mukinupin* was represented in relatively few responses.

Some texts, particularly those which are 'ideas' driven (eg *Measure For Measure*) were more difficult to successfully relate to the question.

Overall

A number of candidates exhibited elementary written expression problems in both courses. The correct spelling of titles and characters' names is considered essential! There was evidence of misquoting and overly long quotations. Handwriting must be legible if candidates are to gain due credit for their work.

1998 Common Question Criteria Guidelines — Drama

A Range 15, 14, 13 — Well Above Average

May be characterised by some or all of the following:

- sophisticated language and argument
- excellent understanding of texts
- appropriate and extensive use of quotation
- explicit discussion of techniques in relation to characters
- links techniques, character and overall purpose of play
- sense of audience response and theatricality
- fluent, relevant, coherent and/or succinct
- deals with 'catch and hold'

B Range 12, 11, 10 — Above Average

May be characterised by some or all of the following:

- articulate and competent in use of language
- very good knowledge and understanding of text • adheres to the question
- makes some points implicitly
- relates techniques to characters through a discussion of themes and issues

- confident control of argument
- selective in choice of support material
- broader definition of ‘technique’
- laboured and/or lacking in flair and style

C Range 9, 8, 7 — Average

May be characterised by some or all of the following:

- competent expression (conveys their message)
- some structure evident
- addresses the question — not merely storytelling
- simplistic in argument
- lacks selectivity even if lengthy
- deals with how the play holds attention rather than specific aspects of character
- problems with integrating ‘technique’ with audience response to character
- focus may drift
- shows sense of audience
- presents character study as a way of getting to importance of character
- lack of balance
- mechanical
- ill defined definition of the term ‘technique’

D Range 6, 5, 4 — Below Average

May be characterised by some or all of the following:

- simplistic / mechanical language
- superficial / awkward / tortured
- attempts question initially but gets lost along the way
- storytelling
- text inaccuracy or limited understanding of the text
- reconstructs own question and does not answer question set
- limited understanding of dramatic technique

- tenuous link between character, technique and audience
- listing
- unbalanced

E Range 3, 2, 1, 0 — Well Below Average

May be characterised by some or all of the following:

- poorly expressed
- outpouring rather than observation
- very tenuous link or no link to the question
- deals with only one text, poorly
- no selectivity or focus
- tries to identify technique but struggles to do so
- poor understanding of dramatic technique
- poor or limited knowledge of the text
- brevity

Some dramatic techniques mentioned by students:

- issues
- conflict
- suspense
- movement
- comedy /humour
- audience response
- dialogue
- play within a play
- lighting
- symbolism / imagery / figurative language
- sound effects
- flashbacks
- climax

- structure
- contrast
- setting
- relationships
- change / growth / learning in characteristics
- soliloquy
- motive
- fourth wall effect
- dramatic irony
- language

Film Techniques:

- camera angles
- lighting
- colour
- scenery
- dance
- costume
- satire
- gesture

Typical 'A' Range Response

‘Both Dylan Thomas and Tom Stoppard create interesting and endearing characters by use of language and by exploiting their mediums. Thomas uses a range of devices to create caricatures of the inhabitants of Llareggub in ‘Under Milk Wood’. He shows the incongruity of their desires and their lives and thus gives his characters more of a semblance of reality. Stoppard’s characters in ‘Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead’ are similarly endearing and life-like, but they serve Stoppard’s purpose of expounding the existentialist philosophies. Stoppard uses comedy to show the way in which both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern suffer the existentialist crisis. However, his characters are more than tools, the empathy between the audience and the two central characters is such that their deaths are sad in a very real sense.

Thomas employs novel language devices to convey the eccentricity of this diverse range of characters. Very vivid similes, such as Polly Garter’s ‘body like a wardrobe’ and the Floyds, ‘like two old kippers in a box’, effectively and economically create caricatures of these characters.

Since Thomas creates so many different characters it is necessary to use such vivid images in order to make them memorable in the stream of aural scenes. Other images of characters such as Mr Pugh who 'foxes' and 'minces' in the 'hissing laboratory of his wishes', create comical characters by use of evocative language to create unconventional descriptions, like Mrs Dai Bread Two who is 'gypsied to kill'. Another device Thomas employs is the use of language to create original settings for his characters that help in their characterisation. The Pugh's 'dining room in a vault' gives the morbidity of their existence, and Polly Garter's garden, growing only 'washing and babies' conveys her sensuality. Meanwhile, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard's 'dust-defying bedroom' gives a sense of her obsession with hygiene and self-control. Through his use of unconventional characterisation, Thomas encourages his audience to disregard conventional modes of judgement. The guide-book notes the 'two-storied' aspect of the town, giving a hint of the complexity of the characters.

By way of his medium, the radio play, Thomas can contrast the dreams and desires of his characters with their reality, and thus gives his characters a more complex dimension. Thomas gives his audience special privileges – they can 'hear the dreams' and go 'behind the eyes' of the inhabitants of the town and access the 'hidden sea' of their desires. Many of the characters have dreams that conflict with their reality. Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard, in her 'holily laundered crinoline nightgown' and 'rinsed sleep', commands her husbands to 'take them off' (their pyjamas) – revealing her sensuality which she takes such care to repress in her day-to-day life. Similarly, Mr Pugh expresses his contempt for his wife in the 'hissing laboratory of his wishes' among 'bad vats and jeroboams' to use against her, while to her he is civil and subservient – 'how's the tea, dear?'. Both Myfanwy Price and Gossamer Beynon are used by Thomas to help express his ideas on sensuality. Both girls have fantasies and desires, Gossamer's is 'all cucumber and hooves' while Myfanwy dreams of a lover 'like a Sunday roast'. However neither express these desires to their respective partners, Gossamer is an 'ice-maiden' while Myfanwy and Mog are 'happily apart'. Through his exploitation of the radio medium, Thomas allows his audience to gain a deeper insight into his endearing and comical characters.

Stoppard creates two distinctly comic characters that are disjointed from the world by his use of language. The very first coin-tossing scene establishes that 'we are in un-, sub-, or supernatural forces' and shows how these two characters are out of order with their world. As part of the existentialist dilemma that Stoppard presents these characters are looking for their identity – 'give us this day our daily mask'. They rely upon others for this identity, interpreting their task, 'glean what afflicts him' – as their path. This however, is futile because they do not understand the language of the Shakespearean characters, Stoppard presents to us these characters that do not know their place in society; 'we have not been picked out...simply to be abandoned...set loose to find our own way...we are entitled to some direction'. The two characters are even isolated from each other, as Stoppard demonstrates in their misunderstandings. During the 'question game' they have a conversation as follows:

G: 'Are you deaf?'

R: 'Am I dead?'

G: 'Yes or No?'

R: 'Is there a choice?'

G: 'Is there a God?'

This quick conversation is typical of their position – they fail to comprehend each other; they end up in metaphysical conversations that give the audience further clues to their character. These uses of language to convey the isolation and confusion of Stoppard's characters are effective not only in characterisation, but in conveying his ideas on existentialism.

These comic characters, are, however, almost tragic in their deaths because Stoppard creates empathy between them and his audience. Stoppard's means is his message, and he uses the theatricality of his play to place the audience in the same confused and uncertain state as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Stoppard breaks theatre conventions firstly by setting them up: 'audiences know what to expect and that is all they are prepared to believe in'. However, he challenges the proposition that 'we're spectators – keep back!' by having Rosencrantz yell 'fire!' into the audience that will not respond. Stoppard's ultimate overtly theatrical device is the use of the dumbshow here his audience watches the 'onstage' characters view their own deaths and he thus demonstrates how his audience is watching themselves in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Therefore, in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's 'little deaths' the audience sees the tragedy of their own death. But, this tragedy is diminished by the dramatic irony that, from the title they 'Are Dead'. Also, the theatricality of the play reminds us that they will 'come back in a different hat' and Guildenstern claims that we'll know better next times'. Thus, the deaths of these two characters are pathetic and poignant because of Stoppard's effective use of his medium.

Both Thomas and Stoppard create interesting characters that are the focus of their plays and succeed in captivating the audience. Beyond this the characters offer the audience something that they can recognise within their own lives and relate to.'

Examiner's Comments

This script demonstrates an excellent understanding of both texts. The candidate is able to articulate a strong discussion of dramatic techniques and how these are used by the playwright to 'catch' and 'hold' audience interest.

Typical 'B' Range Response

'The characters in the play have to be interesting'. The plays 'Strictly Ballroom' and 'Death of a Salesman' use such techniques as makeup/costume, flashbacks, setting as well as lighting, in order to grasp and hold interest in its characters for the audience.

Within the play 'Strictly Ballroom', those characters who are to be depicted as 'baddies' are given grotesque physical features through the use of 'tacky' fruity outfits and overdone 'tacky' makeup. Colloquial and slang language has also been used in order to give these characters a humorous, revolting but interesting character. In some cases, the character such as Barry Fife who is seen as the God of the federation is intended to be frowned upon. As like his ugly appearance and fake hair piece, he too is fake. Manipulating minor characters for his own pleasures. Shirley Hastings entails a revolting 1960's overdone use of makeup, used to shield her revolting nature from the audience, making the audience more interested as Shirley and Barry Fife create conflict within the play. Through the spectacular sparkling outfits of the dancers, glitz and glamour is demonstrated, appealing to the interests of the audience which immediately catch your attention. The opening scene begins with an almost fairytale beginning, while dancers gracefully dance in their stunning outfits while the huge red velvet curtains open to the dance floor. The stunning

performances by the dancers, evoke tremendous feeling of the audience as it is so entertaining, comical and expressive. This entertaining play uses the vernacular Australian language to exaggerate particular characters, as well as making those more withdrawn characters like Doug Hastings seem more intriguing. With his Cedal breath freshener, a comical, mocking approach is made, but it becomes more serious when the audience witnesses his mysterious shuffling and crying. It evokes the curiosity of the audience, thus keeping them focussed on the plot.

The use of flashbacks in 'Death of a Salesman', is extremely evident as the audience witness Willy's reminiscing of the past. With these flashbacks of the Lomans' past, the audience is able to see and understand Willy's concerns as they entail the generally good financially stable times of the family. This emphasises more greatly on the problems they now face, financially and the relationships of the family. Faint flutes are played when Willy is reminiscing, which creates a much more dramatic, melancholy, depressing attitude enlightening the audience to his distress and personal suffering. While in 'Strictly Ballroom', music is used to display the fairytale, colourful, comedy of the tone of the movie appealing to a more lighthearted audience. 'Death of a Salesman', creates great emphasis on success, which has been denied by Willy and his two sons, Biff and Happy. Willy had always boosted his sons morale as children even when stealing and other dishonest behaviour was going on. This is evident in the flashbacks, thus enabling the audience to understand the disheartenment and disillusionment felt by Happy and Biff. They are living in a world of illusions and dreams. Biff comes to this realisation when Willy's kills himself in the expectation that insurance money will help his sons. The audience is saddened greatly when they acknowledge this can't be, and although Willy always had good intentions and high expectations, he had created a world of false hopes 'phony dreams'. Within 'Strictly Ballroom', old movie flashbacks are used in order to enlighten the audience to the understanding of Doug's past. Barry Fife being the commentator tries to reveal the 'truth', but is later established, he was ironically lying for his own means. This comical, stage production of past memories is very entertaining, grasping the humorous side of the audience. Thus though flashbacks both plays keep the audience interested.

Lighting is an extremely important stage technique, especially in 'Death of a Salesman'. The dull and daunting blue light surrounding Willy when planting his seeds so late at night displays the sadness, traumatised mind of Willy. This evokes the inner feelings of the audience, enabling them to understand and feel the emotions of Willy. The café scene is also important where lighting is evolved, as it depicts the frustration and anger felt by Biff when trying to explain the truth to his father. The red lights demonstrate rage, anger and sex, evoking the audience to understand Biff's frustration. The illuminated lights in the Pan Pacifics Stadium in 'Strictly Ballroom', depicts the excitement, celebration and competitiveness of the dance. It also highlights Doug's courage and initiative when he commences clapping for Scott's glory (dancing his own steps). It is here that under the illuminated lights, that reconciliation is established. By Doug conquering his life long fear, he and his wife end the play with 'Shall we dance', and indication to the romance faced. It is also here, in the huge stadium, that many characters reconcile with each other, while the 'baddies', have been gotten rid of, thus portraying an inspirational and uplifting experience to the audience, about particular characters.

The setting in both plays enables the audience to grasp the reasons behind each character's circumstance. Willy's home, being of unstable conditions, and little furnishing, cold and impersonal reflects the financial disabilities of Willy. While in 'Strictly Ballroom', the Hastings' home is of comfort, although clustered with furnishings, it is lavish with evidence of family success. Trophies, photographs, medals, etc. While the Hastings place so much emphasis on

success, Scott is thus seen to be a star while his father is an indirect hero, as he enables his son to carry out his life long dream, going against the conformities of the dance federation. 'Death of a Salesman', although they placed most emphasis on success, it is evident through lack of evidence and decoration that they have not succeeded, thus evoking sad emotions by the audience.

The plays 'Death of a Saleman' and 'Strictly Ballroom', use techniques including makeup/costume, flashbacks, lighting and setting in order to keep the audience interested in particular characters. It enables the audience to understand the successes and hardships of both family's.'

Examiner's Comments

This script shows an above average understanding of both plays. It adheres to the focus of the question, remaining on task throughout. A wide range of examples from the texts are used to substantiate the points raised. It has a clear understanding of the theatricality of both plays in performance.

Typical 'C' Range Response

'The writer of a drama must consider his audience when writing a piece. People who see plays are often interested in all aspects of a script, especially interaction between characters. Movie goers, on the other hand, are a more diverse audience and the emphasis of film script writers is often on plot. Dramatists such as Ray Lawler however have been known to voice their opinion that a play should not be about plot, but rather characters within the play. This opinion can also be seen in George Bernard Shaw's work, and by analysis of Lawler's 'Summer of the Seventeenth Doll' and Shaw's 'Pygmalion', we can see techniques used to work towards this statement.

The characters of 'Summer of the Seventeenth Doll' are colourful and unique, the type of characters to catch and hold a viewer's interest in a drama. Lawler has picked the period of his play well, as by introducing us to the 'Lay-off' after Nancy's departure, he is able to use the somewhat demure Pearl as a foil to the other, less restrained characters of the play. In fact, the opening dialogue between Pearl and Olive, who are somewhat opposite in character with Olive happy about the lay-off and Pearl pointing out that 'no-one would say it was a respectable way to live' arouses the audience's interest immediately, as by the foil technique both Pearl's disapproval and Olive's tense anticipation are drawn out to maximum effect.

Another effective technique Lawler uses regarding character is to create anticipation in the audience by building expectations of a character up, an example being Olive talking of Roo and Barney as a 'couple of Kings' however when they appear, with the audience anticipating their arrival, they are not kings but tired, middle-aged men with greying hair. This is surprising to the viewer, whose interest is then held to see what other surprises are in store.

'Pygmalion' also builds up anticipation in the audience due to character, but in a different style. After seeing Liza as a flower girl, and meeting Higgins who ponders whether he should 'ask this baggage to sit down, or shall we throw her out the window' the audience becomes interested in the drama unfolding as the wish to see Liza's character develop. Shaw enjoys making his characters realistic and, in an ironic twist to the legend 'Pygmalion' refers to, his characters fight and disagree, hardly the quality of the 'duchess at a garden party' Liza is meant to be, but far more realistic and easier for the viewer to relate to.

Another technique to provoke thought and therefore create interest is the introduction of satirical characters. Alfred Doolittle is liked by audiences as he is a send-up of 'middle class morality', with his version of being that he wishes to stay poor, a turn around to usual thinking, such a colourful character captivates the audience's attention and creates anticipation to see how he will fit in with other characters. Another example is Clara Eynsford-Hill, a parody of young girls wishing to be fashionable. Though Mrs Higgins observes that Liza is 'a triumph of (Higgins') art, and her dressmakers', Clara is blissfully unaware of any sly plans, and is delighted to be in fashion by sprouting 'such bloody nonsense' inappropriately as she leaves. Such a satire again brings a character to life and holds a viewer's interest.

By structuring their dramas so that characters are the main focus, rather than the plot, Lawler and Shaw create colourful scenes of varying depth which audiences like to interpret, and ponder over what happens next. Such techniques, when used by playwrights, will ensure that they can catch and hold viewers' interest in the characters, and therefore the play.'

Examiner's Comments

This script addresses the question, dealing with two basic techniques for each play. It is expressed competently. It lacks, however, the depth and development of ideas which is a feature of the 'A' and 'B' range scripts in both the General and Related courses.

PAPER 2

SECTION II — PART A — POETRY (UNIQUE)

Overview

Most candidates showed a pleasing understanding of the poetry studied. While most of the questions seemed to pose equivalent degrees of difficulty, the Keats question was an exception. Here, the terms ‘romantic dissatisfaction’ and ‘satisfying’ proved particularly challenging for some candidates’.

Most candidates coped well with the format of the questions, where a particular poem was specified, and where a second poem of the candidates’ choice had to be discussed. This choice of a second poem often proved to be a discriminator in that some set poems were more suitable to the question than others.

This year examiners particularly bemoaned the use of paraphrase. A disappointing number of candidates, who clearly knew the poems well, simply strung together a series of quotations that explained the ‘meaning’ of the poem. To retell the poem is insufficient. Students are encouraged to grapple with the poetry, and with what makes the poetry ‘work’.

Poetry Marking Guidelines

A Range 15, 14, 13 — Well Above Average

- Well above average but not necessarily perfect
- Answer displays a clear understanding of the requirements of the question
- Generally a sophisticated style and structure
- Often displays flair, fluency and originality
- Sustained discussion of the poems which demonstrates insight — presents a line of argument
- Deals effectively with two poems — the specified poem should be thoroughly explored
- The chosen poem should be shown to be appropriate to the question
- Effective discussion of poetic techniques and language should be evident
- There should be effective use of quotations, well integrated to support the argument

B Range 12, 11, 10 — Above Average

- Proficient
- Above average response that may have some flaws
- Engages with the question
- May display sophisticated style and structure
- Sustained response showing reasonable fluency — presents some line of argument
- Interpretation is supported by argument and appropriate evidence drawn from the poems
- Appropriate use of quotation, well integrated to support the argument
- Detailed understanding of the ideas in the poems
- Some reasonable reference to the effectiveness of the language
- The poem chosen should be shown to be appropriate

C Range 9, 8, 7 — Average

- Competent
- Adequate understanding of the poems discussed and an attempt to answer the question (may imply an understanding of the question rather than establish a direct link)
- At the top of this range the candidate should have an understanding of the poems and may have an appreciation of their qualities and poetic impact
- Generally sound expression and logical structure — laboured expression/problems with expression may get to lower C range
- Weaker C scripts may paraphrase, but in doing so should show some poetic understanding
- May refer to poetic devices but with little understanding of effect
- May be stronger on one poem than another

Candidates who only refer to the set poem can score no higher than the C range.

D Range 6, 5, 4 — Below Average

Will be limited in response to the question with some of the following characteristics:

- unsupported generalisations
- may have a list of terms or points that are not explained
- may be repetitive
- shows a limited, generalised understanding of both poems

- over reliance on recounting content, storytelling or paraphrasing
- simplistic ideas with little substantiation
- may interpret part of the question/poem
- may not be completed
- may be articulate but with insufficient content

Candidates who neglect the set poem can score no higher than the D range.

E Range 3, 2, 1 — Well Below Average

Will be a poor response to the question with some of the following characteristics:

- does not engage with the question
- problems with expression
- discussion not substantiated, unsupported generalisations
- irrelevant discussion
- serious misunderstanding or lack of understanding of the poems
- inadequate treatment of two poems
- minimal knowledge
- ideas often simplistic
- no concept of the poems as entities
- incomplete

Question 4. Geoffrey Chaucer

*In what ways is **The Pardoner's Tale** appropriate to its teller? (Include the prologue in your discussion).*

Above Average Responses

Candidates in this range revealed an ability to hear and appreciate the poetic qualities of Chaucer's language. They did not neglect to discuss the Tale itself, and discovered subtle reinforcements in the events, characters and language of the Tale which reflected on the Pardoner's true self. Such candidates saw that both The Pardoner and his words were a purposeful creation by Chaucer. Answers in this range quoted the text with great accuracy.

Average Responses

These answers generally addressed the question, but showed no great sense of the poetic qualities of Chaucer's language. Their evidence might have been drawn from a translation of the text, being merely references to events and superficial content. Candidates here often wrote at length about The Prologue, in which the Pardoner explains his hypocrisy, but neglected to discuss the actual tale.

Below Average Responses

These responses tended to ignore the Tale altogether and simply paraphrased the Pardoner's confessions of hypocrisy from the Prologue. These answers often revealed difficulty in quoting the text accurately.

Question 5. John Donne

'Self-centredness and surprise are at the heart of Donne's poetry'.

Discuss this statement with reference to 'The Sunne Rising' and ONE other of the poems set for study.

There are a number of ways to approach this question. The examiners do not suggest that the following is a model that should be copied. It is simply one of the scripts which goes in the 'A' range. What it has in common with other 'A' scripts is a solid discussion of poetic features related to self-centredness and surprise. It displays a genuine feeling for the poetry, and does more than simply list metaphysical characteristics.

Above Average Response

'In 'The Sunne Rising' and 'Death be not proud' we do see a sense of self-centredness. However this 'arrogance' is not derived from egotism but from the steadfastness of the persona to his particular set of beliefs. Surprise is found in the ingenuity of Donne and his ability to use poetic language techniques to convey an original meaning.

In 'The Sunne Rising' the persona condescends to the sun, claiming to have love which is supreme. There is surprise here in Donne's originality to invert the traditional concept of the sun representing virtue and strength.

The poem opens:

'Busie old fool, unruly sun'.

This is a direct address to a personified sun. This first speaker's perspective and condescending tone highlights the self-assuredness that the speaker holds. Word play is used to mock the sun. 'Busie' means both 'busy' and 'busy-body'. 'Why dost thou call on us?' There is an annoyance in the persona's tone. He is disrespectful to the sun. He also calls the sun 'saucy ped antique wretch' expressing a clear feeling of superiority. The use of imperative verbs to order the sun about 'goe chide', 'goe tell' is essentially telling the sun to 'go away'. The persona lists the things the sun should go bother. He is showing a disregard for the trivial world outside his own world of love.

Then separated from the rest of the stanza by a semi-colon and therefore a dramatic pause, the persona introduces what he has that is more powerful than the sun. His love he claims is not ruled by time. He lists the measures of time – 'houres, dayes, months' in a list proving a cumulative effect of mounting disregard. It climaxes with 'rags of time' showing clearly what he thinks of these conventions.

In the next stanza Donne again surprises us with his ingenuity. He claims that with a mere 'winke' he can eclipse and cloud or block out the sun. The monosyllabic nature of 'wink' reduces the action, and stresses how the sun can be ignored by such a small action. There is also an open challenge showing a confidence – the persona asks why the sun thinks he is so strong. This direct question is used to convey a self-centredness through its audacity.

The persona then develops the idea that 'All here in one bed lay'. He orders the sun with an air of contempt to look and see if all the wealth in the spices of India cannot be found in the one bed when he lies with his mistress. He uses the concept of their love as a kingdom, challenging the sun to search for kings and to find them with him and his lover.

This idea is 'confirmed' in the final stanza, 'She is all States, and all Princes, I/Nothing else is'. We are surprised by Donne's creative metaphor for love as a kingdom and high claims that all else amounts to nothing. This shows a self-centredness. 'Nothing else is' is a complete line in itself and full stopped to emphasise the assuredness of the assertion and to create a tone of arrogance.

At the poem's close Donne surprises us again with his ingenuity and remarkable ability to play with logic to shape his meaning. The persona argues that since it is the duty of the sun to warm the world, and all the world lies with the couple in the one bed, then the sun's duty is done in shining merely on the two. 'This bed thy centre is, these walls thy sphere'. 'Bed' has several connotations which Donne expresses as a physical consummation of the powerful spirituality of love. 'Sphere' refers to the room as the world and the image creates a sense of wholesomeness and purity. This final turn of logic is surprisingly clever and reaffirms the persona's concern with his belief – provoking in him a justified self-centredness.

In 'Death be not proud' we witness a similar self assuredness. The persona is completely immersed in the belief that upon dying he will be given eternal life. The tone of the poem is proud and triumphant and the direct address to death, as with the sun shows a defiance that appears as self-centred.

It opens with 'Death be not proud' and this idea is isolated by a comma to provide a dramatic pause. The statement is simple and clear expressing again a confidence and self-assuredness. The line continues 'Though some ...'. The emphasis is on these two words placed after the opening declaration. This serves to highlight the weakness of the few who believe that death is mighty. 'For, thou art not soe'. The long sound of the syllable 'for' and following pause emphasise, like the opening statement, a defiance in its simplicity and self-assured tone. This defiance is created through the short monosyllabic 'thou art not soe', and equal stress is given to each word.

'Die not, poore death', opens on a new line so that 'Die not' is recognised and made clear. He is downgrading Death by arguing that people do not die. 'Poore death' condescends to Death, revealing again a contempt which is in the vein of a righteous self-centred attitude.

Donne surprises us again with his creativity. The persona argues that Death is a heavy sleep and that since sleep is enjoyable then more joy would come from Death. This ridicules Death, inverting its normal interpretation of being a grim and fearful force. This syllogistic argument surprises us with its ingenuity and creativity. Death is further reduced. It is called a 'slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men'. These are the masters of Death and with the mention of each one there is a cumulative disregard and contempt climaxing with 'desperate men' who may be weak but still rule over death.

Death is downgraded as being earthly. The persona says it dwells with sickness and therefore has no might. The persona shows a confidence when he goes as far as to suggest there are replacements for death. 'Charmes' and 'poppies' he argues can make us sleep just as easily. There is an almost impudent tone here that shows the persona's self-centredness and belief that he is correct.

However, the heart of the poem and greatest cause for awe at the ingenuity of Donne's argument is that he is able to say that having woken eternally from a death, death itself will die. This final paradox is surprising and convincing to the reader/audience and is profound in its wit. It has shown a complete disregard for death and finalised the mounting self assuredness by sentencing death with the direct and blunt:

'Death, thou shalt die'.

These poems show a surprising and delightful creativity which expresses the self-centredness of the personas in their argument for the strength of their beliefs.'

Average Responses

Candidates in this range often found 'self-centredness and surprise' reflected in the personas Donne uses, rather than in his language. They were more interested in the poem as an idea that had to be explained, rather than as poetry. The student who felt 'Donne's self-righteous attitude is reflected in the persona in "The Apparition" ' has confused persona with the poet. The following response reflects a similar confusion:

The poem has a scornful opening "Busie old fool, unruly Sunne" as the poet immediately introduces his argument. He jeers the duties the sun must perform and degrades it's value. It is obvious that the poet is self confident and is only concerned with his love making.

Below Average Responses

Responses in this range lacked consistent argument. Some candidates confused 'self-centredness' with the poetic device of conceit. Others provided no more than a paraphrase of the poems.

Question 6. John Keats

‘The poetry of Keats is a poetry of romantic dissatisfaction that we find nevertheless satisfying’.

Explore this paradox with reference to ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ and ONE other of the poems set for study.

Above Average Responses

Better candidates addressed both the quotation and the question of paradox. They tended to see that it was through romantic dissatisfaction that Keats approached an acceptance of the human condition. They understood the role of the poet in helping to explain our world, and saw this as being satisfying. The following is not presented as a perfect response, but is one example of an A range script.

An Above Average Response

‘Keat’s indeed expresses an overwhelming dissatisfaction with the mortal world, and endeavours to evolve to the metaphysical realm of the immortal through his poetic vocation, a characteristic element of the Romantic poets. However ironically, his sensitive appreciation of the complexity and richness of the human experience through his sensual imagery and luxuriant rhythmic and sound devices, causes the reader to also consequently appreciate the intensity of the mortal world, thus satisfying us as opposed to his dissatisfaction, particularly in his poems ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ and ‘Bright Star’.

Keats dissatisfaction is captured in the very first line of ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ itself,

‘My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my sense’.

Ironically the remainder of the poem however, although encompassing the intensity with which Keats endeavours to escape to the Nightingale’s world, in fact appeals to the very senses of the reader and thus establishes a satisfaction with his poetry. The last two lines of the first stanza ‘beechen green and shadows numberless, singest of summer in full throated ease’, boast luxuriant extended vowel sounds particularly in the words ‘beechen’, ‘green’ and ‘throated’. These create the ‘drowsy’ effect on the reader mimicking the ‘dull opiate’ which Keats isolates as the very effect of the Nightingale’s song. The reader is thus intensely drawn in to appreciate both Keats’ dissatisfaction and his desires, augmenting the readers own poetic experience and establishing the satisfaction felt.

In the second and the third stanzas also, there is an overwhelming emphasis on human sensations, which paradoxically creates a tension with Keats’ endeavour to evolve to the immortal world, encaptured by the art of the Nightingale’s song. He says ‘beaded bubbles winking at the brim, and purple-stained mouth’, magnificently capturing the movement of the bubbles in an almost onomatopoeic effect of the ‘b’ sounds, while creating the rich image of abundance and satisfaction by the association of the ‘sensual’ colour purple, around his mouth. The synaesthesia in the line, evokes both the reader’s audible senses, as well as a mouth watering response to the richness of the ‘purple stained mouth’. In the fifth stanza also, there is an overwhelming reliance on the senses in expressing Keats’ dissatisfaction.

He must ‘in embalmèd darkness guess each sweet’, highlighting the fact that without the intensity of human awareness, particularly sight as the deathly image of ‘embalmèd darkness’ implies, his desire to escape to the Nightingale’s perpetual world of perfection is also ultimately dissatisfying. There is indeed a strong sense of escape encompassed throughout ‘Ode to a Nightingale’, particularly captured by the dissatisfaction of the mortal world – ‘where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin and dies’ – highlighting Keats’ inability to come to terms with the transient nature of life. Nevertheless, we are left with a sense of satisfaction, as his ‘waking dream’ transports us to a realm which is a rich coagulation of sumptuous sounds and images, overflowing with the intensity of human experience.

‘Bright Star’ also is essentially Keats’ weighing up of the positive ‘steadfastness’ that the pristine extremes of immortality offers, with the sensual intensity of the human experience. Keats’ romantic dissatisfaction is not limited to the transience of the mortal world here, but he also explores the cold isolation which is associated with the immortal. Again we see a characteristic of the Romantic poets, for example Coleridge’s poem ‘Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner’. There is a retraction from the ideal permanence in the very second line itself ‘Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night’. The extended vowel sounds in ‘lone’ and ‘hung’ emulate the isolation of the star. Both words encompass a perpetual passivity. The word ‘hung’ is even physically suspended in the middle of the sentence; the star is isolated indeed.

The cold, pristine image of ‘snow upon the mountain and the moors’ is immediately contrasted with the soft and sensual intensity of ‘pillowed upon my fair love’s ripening breast’. The gentle ‘l’ sounds in ‘pillowed’ have a soothing, calming effect on the reader, while the word ‘ripeness’ captures the fecundity and liveliness of the human experience. Particularly in the line ‘Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath’, the emotional response of the reader comes to a climax, as the syncopation in ‘tender taken’ captures the fragile vitality of life. Furthermore the intensity in the word ‘swoon’, marks the definite resolution Keats has, to accept the unique intensity and ripeness of the human experience in all its transience, and thus is satisfying to the reader as she/he also appreciates such aspects.

Indeed Keats portrays a strong sense of romantic dissatisfaction, particularly in ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ and attempts to create an ideal world where the ripest moments of the mortal world are suspended in the perpetual permanence of the immortal. However, his poetic journey is richly embedded with the sensitivity and intensity of his style, ultimately causing the reader to be satisfied despite the dissatisfaction of his poetic content.

Average Responses

While average candidates could discuss ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ and one other poem in some detail, they failed to come to terms with the language Keats uses. There was some uncertainty about what ‘romantic dissatisfaction’ was, and ‘satisfying’ could simply reflect the fact that the student enjoyed reading the poem. Responses such as the following tended to be a little simplistic.

Although Keats discovers many paradoxes in this ode, these paradoxes, to the reader are quite satisfying. This is because it provokes thought in the reader, and actually engages them in the poem. Furthermore, the paradoxes reflect those of life, and so are also relevant to us. Besides paradoxes however, it is also the experience that Keats describes that retains our interest and satisfaction in the poem. Such imagery as “trodden weed”, “What heifer-lowing at the skies?” that are not answered allows us, as the reader to follow the poet’s experience and so we are nevertheless satisfied.

Below Average Responses

Below average candidates were too often concerned with biographical detail. They noted that Keats' brother was unwell, rather than focussed on the wonderful progression the commas occasion in 'Where youth grows pale, and spectre thin, and dies'. They retold the poems rather than showed an awareness of the poetry.

Question 7. Robert Browning

What use does Browning make of the exotic and the unusual in his poetry?

Answer with reference to 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb' and ONE other of the poems set for study.

Above Average Responses

Above average candidates did not necessarily make a distinction between 'exotic' and 'unusual' but did understand that it was the language that created the exotic and unusual, rather than simply the characters and/or settings portrayed in the poems.

An Above Average Response

'Robert Browning set out to illustrate 'action in character' and transposes the reader into the world of the Renaissance. His choice of disturbed persona's and the rather unconventional format of dramatic monologues is unusual. 'The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St Praxed's Church' is a poem exploring the mind of a dying ecclesiastic and the 'Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister' the speech of a monk. However, Browning has used the exotic, the unusual and the grotesque to shatter the traditional stereotype of a cloistered calm and the dignity of a dying ecclesiastic's last request, to show Browning's theme on the role of the individual, free from the constraints of claustrophobic religion and puritan asceticism, but a complete Renaissance man.

In 'The Bishop' Browning has transported the reader to an exotic world of a High Renaissance Church in Italy. Concerned with the idea of a national identity, this full blooded Italian sensuously caresses his love of stone, women and fine wine. The preconception of a traditional resigned dying Bishop is shattered by his imagery of 'red wine of a mighty pulse' as he sees life and stability even in incarnate stone, 'thick marbly limbs' and his almost religious emphatic admiration of 'strong thick stupefying incense-smoke' with a vigorous triple stress.

Browning's great historical knowledge is exploited as he name drops the particular names of stones 'travertine', 'basalt' and his knowledge of Christian doctrine 'Moses with his fables', 'the pulpit', 'the epistle'. Browning is able to create a vivid sense of atmosphere as the reader imagines the 'frascati villa with, its bath' and the 'white grape vineyard'.

The poet is also able to disturb the reader by the unusual effect. The language of the poem deteriorates as the man's memories become more and more vague. The conjunction 'And' multiplies untraditionally at an alarming rate as an index of the man's greed:

And so, about this tomb of mine...

And then how ...

And hear ...

And see ...

And feel ...

The unusual and disturbing imagery of 'your eyes were as a lizard's quick,/They glitter like your mother's for my soul' is exotic and at the same time almost grotesque. The unwitting story of 'fought' for his niche in the Church of peace also provides unexpected humour. Browning destroys the initial tone of religious righteousness 'Vanity, saith the preacher' and the moralising maxim of 'What's done is done...' by enlivening the rhythm and pace, showing life and instability against the resigned hopelessness that he will not get his desired tomb.

The poet creates an unusually strong tension within the poem as these two poles pull against one another in the man's mind. The fleeting moments of self knowledge and failure are juxtaposed against strong urges and desires to enjoy life to the full. This illustrates the humanist in Browning. His thesis is not as expected, and belied by the dramatic irony

of the ecclesiastic's obvious hypocrisy and lack of true piety and ability to comprehend a level higher than the temporal. The monk is failed and doomed. The true individual needs to appreciate the vigour of life giving forces, combined with a higher spirituality.

Even more so in Browning's 'Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister', the typical stereotyped cloister monk is replaced by a lustful, revengeful, vicious almost Satanist. In this poem Browning has fully exploited the exotic, destroying the almost Bible-like stanza form within with unusual rhythms and a fierce, seething, pulsating tone. The oddities and incongruity of malicious blasphemous maledictions emanating from a monk are absurd. 'Hell dry you up with its flames!'.

Here Browning is able to show great vibrant contrast between the pious Brother Lawrence, continuously linked with fruits and flowers – 'rose-acacia', 'melons' and the animalistic ferocity of the persona's non-verbal 'Grrr –'. Browning disconcerts the traditional poetry reader and historian who associates the High Renaissance period with one of great missionary works and improvements in the church, by illustrating in full glory this failed ecclesiastic. Even the rhythm is disrupted by disturbing pauses and exclamations.

The reader is transported to an exotic world in this confined cloister as the persona is spurred by the monk's careful gestures tending various unusual plants 'myrtle bush' 'acacia' to wilder and wilder schemes for his damnation. The imagery is strange and wonderful 'thick like horsehairs' – and like the incongruity of the Bishops' deluded couplings of 'Pans, Nymphs and Moses', the effect is strangely comical. The monk links his 'scrofulous French novel' with a passage in Galatians and humorously shows the discrepancy between his professed piety and his actual sins.

However, Browning's effect, is not to simply damn this poor 'thorn among the roses' but show the reader through dramatic irony that the extent of his dreadful sins is only pinching flower buds, and it is the High Renaissance custom that all first sons entered the clergy that is rather to blame for his seething humanness and the extent of his spiritual bankruptcy.

Browning's central thesis in both these two poems is not as expected, and modern in his total view of humanness and the spiritual. He takes characters – sometimes like 'Andrea del Sarto', actual High Renaissance figures – and shows them with unexpected and disturbing character flaws which not only shock the reader but are a comment on his society as well. Browning uses the exotic in his structure, grotesque imagery, odd characters and ironic incongruous word choice and combines all to transport the reader into the exotic High Renaissance world.'

Average Responses

Average candidates tended to say that it was exotic or unusual for a Bishop to have 'sons'. They may have noted the sexual concerns reflected in the Madonna's breast, but there was no real coming to grips with Browning's language; for example:

In "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St Praxed's Church", Browning demonstrates the exotic, through the obvious wealth of the Bishop, his vanity, and his last dying wish for an eccentric and proud tombstone that can throw scorn at old Gandolf for an eternity.

Below Average Responses

These were usually little more than a retelling of the story. Candidates are advised not to abbreviate the poem's title to 'A. B. O. H. T'. To talk about 'the poem', or to use the phrase 'here we see' is fine.

Question 8. Gerard Manley Hopkins

'Hopkins' poems praise God through nature, and nature through God'.

Discuss this statement with reference to 'Pied Beauty' and ONE other of the poems set for study.

Above Average Responses

Above average candidates explored the question through a close examination of the language of the poetry. They confronted both aspects of the question in some manner, many saying that in Hopkins' poetry nature and God are indistinguishable.

Average Responses

Average candidates demonstrated a familiarity with the poems, but often did not focus closely enough on the question. They tended to list techniques rather than discuss their effects.

Below Average Responses

Below average responses tended to be brief and were little more than paraphrases of the poems.

Question 9. Seamus Heaney

For Heaney, poetry is about 'opening up the hidden places of the imagination'.

Discuss this statement with reference to 'Punishment' and ONE other of the poems set for study.

Above Average Responses

Above average candidates captured the real sense of puzzlement in Heaney's poetry, the dichotomous situation in Northern Ireland, and the struggling nature of the poet as craftsman.

Even from the opening of "Punishment", the reality of such hidden violence is seen. The poem identifies with the pain of the woman – to the extent where the poem states not only "I can see her drowned/body in the bog", but "I can feel the halter at the nape/of the neck". The observer is already experiencing, identifying, embodying the pain. The precision of the feeling is matched by its detail, the individual experiences of "the tug" and "the wind/on her naked front".

Average Responses

Average candidates interpreted the statement on a more literal level, and found it difficult to go beyond the idea that Heaney used his imagination to see the girl in the bog. Their understanding of the relationship between the bog body and the 'betraying sisters' was little more than a mechanical recognition of similarity.

Below Average Responses

Below average responses were little more than a retelling of the poetry, strung together with quotations.

Question 10. Les Murray

‘Les Murray is uncompromising in his judgements of Australian culture’.

Discuss this statement with reference to ‘Sydney and the Bush’ and ONE other of the poems set for study.

Most candidates who attempted this question could identify aspects of Murray’s ‘uncompromising judgements’ of Australian culture. Too few students, however, went beyond this to explore how these judgements were reflected in Murray’s use of language. The examiners felt that Murray may have been studied by less able Related students. Top scripts were hard to find. The choice of a second poem was particularly important. Too rarely did students choose a poem as richly emotive as ‘Spring Hail’ or ‘An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow’, and explore what these might add to a conception of Australian culture. ‘Driving Through Saw Mill Towns’ was the most popular second poem, and students often found it hard to argue that Murray consistently glorified the bush and denigrated the city.

For above average candidates, the distinguishing feature was the extent to which they saw Murray’s poetic devices contributing to his ‘uncompromising judgements’. Less effective responses tended to retell the poems.

Question 11. Gwen Harwood

‘Harwood draws images from the physical world to explore the spiritual’.

Discuss this statement with reference to ‘The Glass Jar’ and ONE other of the poems set for study.

This question elicited some fine responses. An awareness of the impact of the narrative form, and an ability to recognise the real sense of loss the young boy feels characterised the better scripts. The awareness of the connection between the physical and the spiritual was a discriminating factor.

Above Average Response

‘Gwen Harwood explores complex issues and concerns from the ‘spiritual’ world using simple narratives and examples from the ‘physical’. In ‘The Glass Jar’, she uses the story of a young boy’s nightmares, intertwined with imagery of nature, religion and music to explore such concerns as the growth from innocence to experience and the ideas of a subconscious mind. More metaphysical concerns such as the human condition are explored in ‘At the Water’s Edge’ using a simple incident at the seashore intertwined with Biblical imagery.

The simple narrative in ‘The Glass Jar’ is concrete and taken from the physical world. The young boy’s ruse of saving sunlight in a glass jar is naïve and endearing. We can identify with the nightmares he experiences and understand his urge to rid himself of them. His fear and disappointment when he finds the jar has failed him and that his ‘comforter’ will not come to him

is as comprehensible as it is vividly described. The ending to his 'perpetual' nightmares, coming as the sun rises, is understood by all who have ever been woken by nightmares as children.

Gwen Harwood has used various images from nature, from the Bible and from music to add depth to the poem. The different images of outdoor settings add an atmosphere to each of the situations he finds himself in, from the 'intricate wood' of his nightmares and the 'the thicket of his fear' to the 'holy commonplace of field and flower' he would like the glass jar to create for him and the uncrossable 'clearing' in his parents' room. The biblical imagery emphasises each of the emotions he feels about his situations – the likening of sunset to the Biblical scene of Christ's prayers and desertion by his followers as they 'from his passion fled' shows the fear with which he regards the fall of darkness, while the awe with which he regards his glass jar is shown in the description of the jar as a 'monstrance', a 'host' to 'bless or exorcise' his nightmares. The musical imagery in the description of his parents' lovemaking as a 'score/no child could read or realise' and the dance macabre carried out in his second nightmare give an idea of complexity. These images go beyond the simple narrative and lead to the deeper themes Gwen Harwood is exploring.

Through this story, Harwood discusses the more complex ideas of growth from innocence to experience and the ideas of the subconscious. The child's lack of understanding of the nature of sunlight and his innocent perception of his parents' lovemaking as 'gross violence' contrast with the understanding his parents have of love and the newly-gained maturity with which he regards the glass jar as simply that – a 'glass jar beside a crumpled scarf' in the morning at the end of the poem. His dreams, first of the 'pincer and clam/trident and vampire fang', images of monsters and then of his hatred of his father who 'scraped assent to the malignant ballet' of the dance macabre, reflect Freudian ideas of the subconscious mind, the images it generates and the idea of a subconscious love for his mother and hatred of his father. These ideas are explored through the medium of the narrative story and imagery.

In 'At the Water's Edge', the narrative is very commonplace and simple: an incident at the beach. The story of the gull's flight away from the writer, and rejection of the food scraps, however, sparks a discussion of the nature of humanity.

The human condition is explored through a contrast with the seagull. While the gull is 'born of earth' and 'will suffer no change', humanity is presented as constantly changing. The human knows and can see 'the fact of the world' and understand 'pain' while the gull is entirely unknowing: but nature has the power to 'snatch or disdain' all of the power which humans give themselves. While the human has 'dominion' over all nature, and can 'speak to the world', the gull has the simple power of 'flight'. This theme is reinforced by images from Genesis and from the Fall. While reflecting the physical world in a description of the seagull, the words 'smooth, reptilian' also evoke images of the serpent in the garden of Eden. The seaweed being 'crimson and green' is a reminder of the fruit of the tree from which Eve ate the tree of knowledge. The 'dominion' of man over nature is a quote from Genesis, recalling that man rules over nature. These images from Genesis and the Fall are reminders of the separation between man and nature.

Using recurring images from the physical world, Gwen Harwood has explored spiritual ideas in her poetry. In 'The Glass Jar', complex ideas of the subconscious mind and of personal growth are discussed through the use of images of nature, religion and music in a simple story of a boy's nightmares. In 'At the Waters Edge' Harwood explores the human condition through an incident at the seashore, using images from Genesis and the Fall. The complex spiritual ideas are conveyed in a concrete, physical way, meaningful to us all.'

Responses which were less effective attempted to address the question, but too often simply listed physical and spiritual images in the poetry. Awareness of the full impact of Harwood's language was often lost in a pursuit of 'hunt for the religious references'. Responses at the lower end of the range could say something like the following, but were unable to go any further; for example:

Harwood is able to draw images from the physical world to explore the spiritual. Harwood uses everyday objects such as the sun and a gull to help her achieve this. Harwood uses her poetic technique and tools to make these everyday images from the physical world explore the spiritual.

Question 12. Robert Gray

'A solitary observer, often the only human being in the poem, viewing a process of despair or decay from afar'.

Explore this comment with reference to 'The Dusk' and ONE other of the poems set for study.

Above Average Responses

Above average candidates explored both the role of the observer and the viewing of the process of decay and despair. Many used the latitude given by the term 'explore' to disagree with the statement in relation to the given poem 'The Dusk'.

This is the opening paragraph of an above average response:

In much of Gray's poetry he is viewing a process of despair and decay from afar. He often shows his sadness and disgust at the human way of life. However this is not true of all of his poems. Some of Gray's poetry is a pure celebration of the beauty of the natural world – one of the concerns deepest to his heart. "The Dusk" is one such poem. In "Flames and Dangling Wire" we are shown the exact opposite of this. Here we see Gray's disappointment at our society's consumerist nature ...

Average Responses

Average responses showed a reasonable attempt to come to terms with the question, but saw elements of despair and decay in 'The Dusk' which perhaps weren't really there. Responses tended to be descriptive rather than analytical.

Below Average Responses

Below average responses failed to really address the question. Some showed signs of not having studied the set poem.

Question 13. Jennifer Maiden

There were no responses presented on this poet.

PART B — FICTION (UNIQUE)

Overview

Most candidates were very literate, with well developed essay writing skills. They were familiar with the texts and were prepared to grapple with the demands of each question. They were able to write at length in the time allowed.

Some candidates had difficulty in developing responses that went beyond a listing of points or examples, while other weaker candidates were drawn into retelling the story rather than developing an argument. Problems occurred for the weakest candidates in understanding the terms within the questions.

Examiners were pleased to note that there was less reliance on critics than in previous years. Candidates need to be reminded to use integrated quotes to support their argument and to engage both with the text and the question.

Some candidates experienced difficulty with the terms encompassed in some of the questions. This was especially true of *Washington Square* where the phrase ‘snobbish comedy of manners’ was understood by only a few students, and also true of *The Great World* where the phrase ‘competing types of male hero’ proved very difficult for candidates.

All questions invited a detailed examination of the issues raised by the texts, although not all students took the opportunity for wide-ranging discussion.

Texts such as *Adam Bede*, *Brighton Rock*, *Tree of Man*, and *Tirra Lirra by the River* were attempted by so few candidates as not to warrant an evaluation of the question for this report.

Marking Guidelines

‘A’ range scripts display sophisticated argument, insight into the text and display a skilful use of supporting evidence.

- Sophisticated argument. Superior insight, discussion of narrative style/structure, excellent control of language.
- Perceptive, detailed, focussed, coherent argument. Deals with full scope of question, especially handles well whatever key word is appropriate to the question.
- Perceptive coherent argument but may falter in some areas or language may be more prosaic.

‘B’ range and above scripts closely analyse all aspects of the question or the parameters set out in question.

- Solid, sustained argument. Some original perceptions, tend to be detailed and argued thoroughly.
- Solid argument, well supported. Shows good understanding of the text and question.

- Strong argument, may be detailed, expression will be competent and fluent, with perhaps obvious well supported examples.

All scripts in the 'C' range show evidence of knowledge and understanding of the text.

- Sound argument. Some fluency, occasional errors of expression, detailed thorough, sustained.
- Tends to be a listing of attributes, eg what makes a heroine. Simple laboured analysis with typical examples. May be long, but consists mostly of storytelling.
- Narrow or partial response to the question but shows knowledge and some understanding of the text.

Scripts in the 'D' range were often brief with limited engagement with the text and the question.

- May not engage with text, possibly incomplete or lacking coherence. May contain errors of language and/or analysis.
- May be brief, show lack of understanding of the text, simplistic analysis, very unbalanced response to question.
- Poor understanding, poor expression, often very brief, lack of evidence.

Scripts in the 'E' range were often very brief with no real engagement with the text or the question. Inadequate language skills were sometimes evident. While a student could fall into this range and still have made the one or two salient points, generally 'E' range responses were categorised by a restricted and often inaccurate view of the text.

Question 14

Jane Austen, *Emma*

Though Emma is by definition the heroine of the novel, it is Jane Fairfax whom we most admire.

What do you think? Give your reasons.

Above average responses were able to deal effectively with the terms 'heroine' and 'admire'. They showed a clear understanding of how Austen, through various strategies, influences the way the reader perceives character.

Average responses presented a balanced argument and showed a good knowledge of the text. They tended to list qualities of Jane Fairfax and Emma which made them admirable and hence limited their discussion to character description as displayed in key and obvious incidents of the novel.

Below average responses showed little understanding of the subtle ways that Austen presents Emma as a likeable character despite her flaws. There were some prepared answers on Emma's growth to maturity.

Above Average Responses

These scripts show the candidate's sure grasp of Austen's narrative techniques and style. They demonstrate the ways in which Jane and Emma are used as foils for each other and the ways each can be perceived as 'admirable'.

An Above Average Response

'In Jane Austen's 'Emma', Emma is the heroine of the novel for many more reasons than just 'by definition'. The reader does indeed admire Jane for her strength of character, however this is only in retrospect, as initially, we are just as much deceived about Frank and Jane's situation as Emma is. This is because of the mastery of Austen's style. She uses irony and point of view effectively in order to plot Emma's maturation. Ultimately, we are pleased, just as Austen and Mr Knightley are that Emma too admires Jane Fairfax as this is a sign of her maturation.

Emma's relationships are initially based on her fortunate situation. She had 'very little to distress or vex her'. Her friendships therefore can be an indication of her strength of character. After Miss Taylor's departure, Emma's friendship with Harriet is based on her chief vice – vanity. Harriet, for Emma, is a convenience. 'A walking companion' always ready to flatter. Her relationship with Harriet therefore means that she is more comfortable to not address her vices, but instead, have them catered to.

Emma's relationship with Frank also indicates that she is unwilling to grow. She does not want to embrace her virtues, and leave her vices behind. Frank constantly caters to her vanity and Emma is frequently found to be siding with Frank, despite thorough knowledge of him. For example, even before Frank arrives, Emma states that 'my idea of him is that he has the desire to be universally agreeable'. The frustrating aspect here is that Austen, Mr Knightley and the reader (to a lesser extent) know that Emma's persuasive powers can be put to much better use than merely romanticising and fantasising. This is why Emma's lack of friendship with Jane is questioned.

Emma and Jane are expected to be friends. They are of equal age and have similar interests. Emma, however is unwilling to make strong friendship because of her vanity. Jane's presence poses a threat. This is why Emma is much more comfortable in the company of Frank and Harriet. We condemn Emma's treatment of Jane as a marginal character. Jane is often treated by Emma as a source of amusement; Emma's Mr Dixon fantasy is the strongest proof of this. However, we do not admire the full strength of Jane's character until the end of the novel when the subterfuge is revealed. When the secret engagement of Frank and Jane is made public, a sense of pathos is created in the reader because of Emma's mistreatment of her. To Emma's credit, however, she too realises the folly of her ways. She is sorry for her treatment of Jane, and realised that of all the distress caused to Jane in Highbury 'she must have been the worse'.

The catalyst for this reflection was Emma's rude and thoughtless comment to Miss Bates at Box Hill. Emma's 'serious reflections' however were not confined to Miss Bates. Emma contemplates every aspect of her folly – Miss Bates, Jane, Harriet and her own heart. This is an indication of Emma embracing her virtues and expelling her vices.

Marriage is shown by Austen to be the only means by which a woman can either better herself or define herself. Emma, by aligning herself with Mr Knightley, shows that she has reached maturation. The engagement of Jane and Frank is the only way Jane can escape certain poverty.

A definite sense of pathos is created in the reader therefore as, in retrospect, we can see Jane's precarious predicament. Her difficult predicament was exacerbated by Mrs Elton, Frank's taunts and Emma's games.

'Emma' is told to us from Emma's perspective. However, through Austen's use of the omniscient narrator, she is able to mock Emma and invite judgement by her use of understated irony. The reader is initially just as deceived as Emma is because we are told the plot line from Emma's perspective. This creates a close connection with Emma as we are able to laugh at her mistakes and our misjudgements and we can then also feel the full impact of Emma's 'serious reflections'.

Our admiration for Jane's strong character is increased when the subterfuge regarding her engagement to Frank is made public. To Emma's credit, and as an indication of her maturation, Emma too admires Jane and feels sorry for her part in distressing Jane. Therefore, we can see, that through Emma's growth, and by distancing herself from her chief vice – vanity, Emma's reflections are predicated by her 'serious spirit'. This indicates that Emma is the true heroine of the novel.'

Average Responses

These scripts showed a very good knowledge of the text, but often laboured to make a strong argument in response to the full demands of the question.

An Average Response

'Emma's self development is a major theme of the novel. She begins the novel as someone with very poor judgement, especially of character; however this develops through a series of blunders. It is this growth which enables the reader to admire Emma at the end of the novel.

Emma decides to take on Harriet Smith, a girl without parents, and make her fit for the society in which Emma is involved. 'Those soft blue eyes and natural graces should not be wasted on the inferior society of Highbury ... Harriet will be seen as one to whom, one can be most useful'. Thus Emma begins to instil in Harriet a love for a Mr Elton; and when she receives a marriage proposal from a farmer, Robert Martin, she persuades her to reject such an offer, and to wait for a proposal from Mr Elton. Mr Knightley sees the reality of the situation, and attempts to warn Emma against him, realising that 'Mr Elton does not mean to throw himself away'. However Emma fails to see the fact that he is in fact in love with her until he is 'making violent love to her' – 'who can think of Miss Smith when Miss Woodhouse is near'. Thus Emma is left with the fact that 'I must have taken up the idea and made everything bend to it'. She now recognises her poor judgement of character. This blunder as with the others however, has come about as a result of innocence on her part; she has meant no harm. Thus the reader does not feel anything untoward to her.'

Question 15

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

'Great Expectations is a study of unsatisfactory relationships.'

What do you think? Give your reasons.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses were able to show a sophisticated understanding of Dickens' use of relationships to comment on social values and moral imperatives.

An Above Average Response

'Relationships and characters are also a factor in Dickens' development of heavy social criticism while specific references to the ironic geographical juxtaposition of St Pauls Cathedral with Newgate prison is typical of Dickens – given his tendency to explore this hypocrisy, relationships again further these criticisms. Characters such as Mrs Joe – with her bib full of pins and needles and Mr Pumblechook, with his sychophancy and mathematics are Dickens' criticism of the miseducation of children. Dickens holds the romantic belief that all children are born innocent. Mrs Joe's rejection of her maternal instincts and her and Mr Pumblechook's assaults on Pip leave the child imbued with a sense of guilt and shame. Pip's relationship with Wemmick, Jaggers and Magwitch are a criticism of the legal systems and it's inequity while characters such as Drummle and Compeyson are criticisms of the falseness of gentility – where appearance and money guarantee them social standing and clemency with the law.'

Average Responses

Average responses tended to divide the text into satisfactory and unsatisfactory relationships and list the features of each. They had a less sophisticated understanding of Dickens' purpose but could deal with a limited view of relationships.

An Average Response

'In the novel's very first page the reader is alerted to some of the novel's major themes, that is the universal struggle between good and evil, and the search for one's own identity. With the exploration of human character and these themes Dickens displays unsatisfactory relationships and their nature, whilst providing its overall effect.'

The relationship depicted in *Great Expectations* between Pip and Mrs Gargery is instrumental to the text. Mrs Gargery's treatment of Pip is certainly unsatisfactory, it is also cruel. Her frequent beatings of Pip are a testament to this. The way that Mrs Gargery justifies her treatment of Pip is also unsatisfactory. She states that it is difficult to raise a child not of her own womb 'by hand'. Many of the novel's characters agree with this treatment. E.g. 'Be grateful boy to them'.

Below Average Responses

Below average responses did not demonstrate a good knowledge of the text and tended to focus on only one or two relationships.

Question 16

George Elliot, *Adam Bede*

What do you see as the moral point of view of Adam Bede?

Few candidates attempted this question.

Question 17

Henry James, *Washington Square*

Washington Square can be read as a snobbish comedy of manners or as a genuine attempt to illuminate the human condition. What is your reading of the novel?

Both the terms ‘snobbish comedy of manners’ and ‘illuminate the human condition’ caused problems for all candidates who attempted this question.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses were able to incorporate a sophisticated understanding of James’ purpose and techniques, and the way the story is shaped. They were able to support their views, using extensive and detailed analysis of the text.

An Above Average Response

‘In Washington Square, Henry James has cleverly interwoven the comedy and the tragedy of the story. Individual parts, particularly the heavy irony present may be comic, but the story as a whole must be said to be tragic. Although to a modern audience the behaviour of the characters must be reminiscent of the comedy of manners, the exploration of relationships in which James engages is far too complex and tragic to allow the novel to exist in this category.

The relationships between characters and the behaviour of individual characters in the novel are James’ main concern. By writing the novel in the third person, he is able to filter everything the audience sees, so that the plot is seen through the eyes of the narrator, not of any individual character. Perhaps it is this intervention which enables the reader to feel such pity for Catherine, a character who fell victim to the clever men of her world – Dr Sloper and Morris Townsend.’

Average Responses

Average responses struggled with the question but were able to discuss James’ broader purpose with regard to ‘human condition’.

An Above Average Response

‘Henry James’ novel *Washington Square* is at times an ironic, satirical look at society and the hierarchical manner in which we lead our lives. James explores the world of all classes, criticises them, and brings the reader to the conclusion of understanding. At times it could be considered as snobbish and is definitely comical at times, but *Washington Square* serves a greater purpose, to explore the worlds of tragic heroes, meddling family members, and the relationships between father and daughter.

James’ satirical approach to the novel and the characters involved is evident throughout the book, and he successfully illuminates the human condition, and evokes thoughts of pity and sadness in the reader. Dr Austin Sloper is introduced as a well educated and highly intelligent man. But James wastes no time in immediately poking fun at Dr Sloper, and the medical profession in general; criticising the handwriting of doctors is one example of this.’

Below Average Responses

Below average responses were confused by the terms of the question and discussed comic moments in the text. Instead of presenting an analysis, many were led into errors about tone as well as themes/issues.’

Question 18

Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*

‘Tess hoped for some accident that might favour her, but nothing favoured her.’

Discuss the tension between Tess’s hopes and experiences.

Above Average Responses

The word ‘tension’ was a discriminator in this question. Above average responses explored ‘tension’ as a literary term implying Hardy’s control of the text.

An Above Average Response

‘A motif of blood is yet another tool by which Hardy creates a sense of tension between Tess’ hopes and experiences. It recurs to compound her misery and remind her of the nature of her world for which ‘blighted star’ stands as a metaphor. The red ribbon is turned to blood, Prince’s blood, and she ‘could not stem the flow’ (a presentiment of her later lack of ability to free herself from ‘the spectres’ of her past that ‘lurked in the background’). The oxymoronic ‘tenderly wringing’ of the pheasant’s necks shows the chasm between Tess’ desire for happiness and harsh reality.’

Average Responses

Average responses specified what Tess hoped for and the outcomes of those hopes in her experiences but tended not to move beyond providing a balance sheet of hopes and experiences.

An Average Response

'In 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' by Thomas Hardy, the protagonist, Tess, appears to be very unfortunate in all her experiences, yet she still hopes for the future that things will work out better. However, it is partly Tess' fault that there is tension between her hopes and experiences due to her personality as well as due to the times she is living in and the men in her life.'

Below Average Responses

Below average responses failed to address both parts of the question and showed an inability to discuss more than a few obvious incidents or ideas.

Question 19

Henry Lawson, *Short Stories*

Discuss Lawson's use of humour in at least TWO of the short stories set for study.

While there was a range of scripts in a small candidature, most students had some difficulty in discussing the effect of humour, or the different types of humour used by Lawson. Average scripts displayed a knowledge of the text but failed to explore Lawson's use of humour.

Question 20

Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock*

'There was poison in his veins, though he grinned and bore it. He had been insulted. He was going to show the world.'

Discuss Pinkie's character and his motivation.

Few candidates attempted this question.

Question 21

Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*

How does Del's relationship with her parents influence her development as a character?

This was a very fair question which allowed students to display their knowledge of the text and of the author's control of both setting and character.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses used the quotation to develop their argument as well as exploring how Del's relationship with others exemplified her relationship with the town and its environs.

An Above Average Response

'As the novel progresses, though, Del's attitude to her home town becomes one of contempt, developed by Munro in her description of negative episodes Del selects for inclusion at this time of her life. The first instance in which Del feels her childhood perception being challenged is the visit by Uncle Bill and his wife Nile. Their artificiality and well-groomed worldliness forces Del to imagine her home town from their perspective. Seen this way, Del perceives Jubilee as being 'Shabby and makeshift. It would barely do'. From this moment on, Del's perceptions of her town are mostly negative, and as a young woman, her entire life is focussed on getting a scholarship that 'would carry me away from Jubilee'.'

Average Responses

Average responses listed the relationship that Del had with her family and other inhabitants of Jubilee but only presented a superficial view of the connection between character and place. Often this range of responses presented a narrow view of 'the lives of girls and women'.

An Average Response

'It is through Del's interaction with other characters that also helps us understand her relationship with Jubilee. Ada can be seen as the catalyst for the change in women and she is Del's main influence and the reason why Del develops her ideas as she does. It is through other relationships such as with Naomi and Jerry that Del learns what she doesn't want to become, that she does not want to be caught in society's trap.

Her relationship with Garnet was a physical one as 'words were our enemies', and this relationship helped Del come to terms with her body and sexuality, another experience for Del, that happened in her home town.'

Below Average Responses

Below average responses discussed Del's development as a character with little or no reference to the demands of the question.

Question 22

Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion*

‘Patrick is an unmade person — he is an unfinished man in a way — and he is only finished by coming into contact with much stronger people.’

How do you see Patrick’s character?

This question allowed a number of equally valid approaches and provided candidates with the opportunity to show their considerable knowledge of the text.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses discussed the notion of the development of Patrick’s character through his relationships with other characters. They combined their discussion with an analysis of Ondaatje’s concept of ‘character’ and with the structural and narrative features of the text.

An Above Average Response

‘Patrick’s character, like the entire novel itself, is a reflection of life, that he is an unmade person throughout his childhood, as most people are, and is only finished by coming into contact with stronger people in his adulthood. These stronger characters, in particular Clara and Alice, the two women in his life and to a lesser extent Caravaggio and Temelcoff, shape Patrick and his views on the world and as the story emerges from chaos, and it is the story of Patrick’s life, so does his life then find order from the ‘chaotic tumble of events’. It is this realignment of the chaos of Patrick’s life into values and morals which he now, at the end of the novel, stands for, that is the finishing of Patrick’s previously unmade character.

Hence, at the end of the novel which ended with ‘all wills rectified and all romances solvent’, Patrick is a strong and finished character. Through his relationships with Clara and mainly Alice, and his final confrontation with Harris, Patrick has made an achievement in his life that neither he nor others in the telling of his story will ever forget. As Ondaatje says ‘Each character had his own time zone, his own lamp, otherwise they were just men from nowhere’. Patrick by the end of the novel has found his time zone, his own lamp. The chaos of his life, and the story of his life has been ordered. Ondaatje’s self-critique sums up the development of Patrick’s story and hence Patrick as a character. ‘Only the best art can order the chaotic tumble of events. Only the best can realign chaos to suggest both the chaos and order it will become’.

Average Responses

Average responses dealt with only the most obvious relationships Patrick has, but were able to show some growth in him through his connection to others. There was sometimes an element of storytelling in this range.

An Average Response

“Little Seeds”, the first part of the book, sets Patrick up as a withdrawn and confident child. His father ‘taught him nothing’ but he learns through experience. He learns how to use dynamite and how to become silent and closed to others. This is seen in his encounter with the skating Finns – he cannot join them because of the language barrier and because he does not feel confident enough in himself. The first section also associates Patrick closely with water.’

Below Average Responses

Below average responses limited their commentary on Patrick’s growth to a narrow focus. They tended to do little more than tell the story.

Question 23

Patrick White, *The Tree of Man*

‘The mystery at the heart of things’

Discuss White’s exploration of the mysterious that underlies common life in *The Tree of Man*.

Few candidates attempted this question.

Question 24

David Malouf, *The Great World*

Explore the tension in *The Great World* between the two competing types of male hero.

While candidates displayed a good knowledge of the text, many found it hard to relate their knowledge to the question. They interpreted ‘types of hero’ as ‘main characters’, and mostly constructed an argument based on the differences between the two main characters. The word ‘tension’, as in Question 18, proved difficult for candidates and many interpreted it as ‘differences’.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses were able to deal with the three main aspects of the question, showing a sophisticated understanding of Malouf’s purpose. Average responses were limited to a discussion of the differences between Vic and Digger, frequently drawing up lists of contrasts to support their argument. The limited view of ‘type’ of hero which was presented, tended to characterise Vic as an ‘active’ hero and Digger as a ‘passive’ or reserved hero.

Question 25

Peter Goldsworthy, *Maestro*

*Discuss Goldsworthy's use of contrast to explore the central issues of *Maestro*.*

This question was handled reasonably well by the bulk of the candidature. It gave grounds for discrimination in the way students were able to integrate their recognition of contrasts with their understanding of issues and thematic concerns.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses were able to show how the narrative method of the text allowed for recognition of change in Paul and Keller, the importance of setting, music and various other motifs in a wholistic manner.

They had a sound understanding of key issues and contrasts and made valid attempts to link the two together. They demonstrated thorough textual knowledge with occasional insights that captured the essence of the text, especially through discussion of characters and relationships.

These responses had a clear understanding of the text as a whole. Integrated knowledge of the nature of the text as a reflective memoir enabled a sophisticated discussion of the influence of contrast to become apparent. Discussion of various settings, the development of characters, the central role of music and the impact of associated characters and symbols was done in a lucid and succinct manner. Confidence was apparent in the candidate's grasp of the whole text and reflected in the integration of quotation.

An Above Average Response

'Peter Goldsworthy's novel, *Maestro*, is a 'rights of passage' story. *Maestro* tells of the life experiences of the protagonist, Paul Crabbe, in this fictitious 'memoir'. Goldsworthy has used a life heavy with contrasts to accelerate Paul's learning experiences. Through Paul's interactions with various characters and settings, Paul is able to learn the difference between love and lust, and about both life and music. Through Keller, Paul is able to learn the gulf between genius and the 'second rate'. Goldsworthy has used contrast to enable Paul to reflect his success and failings and continue life 'Endlessly, effortlessly'.

Darwin is a town of 'booze, blow and blasphemy'. It is a 'terminus' for those 'going nowhere', yet it is because it is the cultural epitome of the 'end of the earth' the cultural epitome, that Paul is ironically able to gain the richest education he could have imagined. Darwin is so far removed from the cultural 'veneer' of Vienna, that it is here that Keller can remain living out his spiritual death, undisturbed. Because of this heavy contrast, Paul is able to be taught 'all that you were able to learn' from Keller about both life and music. Darwin also becomes the backdrop to Paul's first sexual excursions. The rich, exotic fecund air parallels the almost uncontrollable hormones bubbling in Paul's body.

From Keller, Paul is to learn to be suspicious of the facade, 'never trust the beautiful', implicit in the opening statement 'First Impressions? Misleading of course'. Through Keller's 'libretto', Keller tries to teach Paul of the fragility of the human condition, he sees his 'textbooks' as an 'operatic' testimony to the stupidity of the human race, he finds them to be 'a kind of poetry', 'an ugly untrustworthy poetry'. Keller's aphorisms are to teach Paul more than he realises at such a young and arrogant age 'Every fish has its depth'.

These early days of Paul's life spent in Darwin, allow Paul to realise the difference between true love and lust, and the importance of 'I loved him in many ways – but I love Rosie more'. Megan Murray is used, by Goldworthy, as a foil to Rosie Zollo. Through Paul's sexual experience with Megan, he finds what 'true love' really is. Also Paul learns what Keller has been trying to teach him, that facade can be misleading. 'I loved Rosie – which at a time in my life when most of my love was wasted on myself was no small achievement'. These experiences also lead Paul into leaving his future to his parents, too involved with his 'senses' – 'As I listened – the future became the present – unchallenged, and all too soon the regretted past'.

There is a heavy contrast between the worlds of music in which Paul finds himself entwined – the rock band 'Rough Stuff' and his classical ambitions. Through this experience, Paul learns of the superficial emptiness that lies behind the fame and fortune of rock music. When Paul realises this, he has learnt that Keller is more insightful than he first appeared. Paul is slowly maturing through his life experiences. This encounter with the bullies, parallels Keller's playing for the Nazis. Although, the contrast here is that Paul's arrogance, although very real, was not fatal, as was Keller's.

The contrasting characters of Paul's parent's 'polarities. Thin and thick, light and dark' lead Paul to learn that they are able to survive together despite their differences. This in a sense, teaches Paul tolerance, and later allows him to accept his 'wasted life' that is evidently redeemed by the love of his wife, and his children.

One of the most important contrasts that is integral to the central issue of learning is that of success and failure. Keller attempts to teach Paul that ego is not foremost, which was Keller's failure. Not to strive too long for perfection for 'to search too long for perfection can paralyse'. With success comes arrogance – 'I was the only pianist I had time to listen to', and with failure came insight – 'in a sense Keller was bad for me; revealing perfection to me, but at the same time snatching it away'. Hence, Paul is able to understand, upon reflecting on his 'time as a child' in Darwin, and to realise his limitations. 'Perhaps there can be no perfection, only levels of imperfection'.

The interesting contrast of Keller's tattoo and Jimmy's, allows both Paul and the reader to understand the pain that Keller put himself through, because he failed to see through his arrogance – 'it is harder to see evil in your own home'.

The contrast at the conclusion of the novel, the 'reconstructed' Darwin and that of the 1960s and 1970s, reflects a 'reconstructed Paul'. In a sense, the total destruction that the cyclone brought to the town, parallels that of the war to Keller's life 'the implications were obvious; his exile was chosen, not forced upon him'. Paul is to learn more about Keller and himself in his excursion to Vienna. Paul's encounter with Henish allows Paul to see the contrast between the old Keller and the new Keller – 'perhaps his Keller had died long before mine was born'.

Hence, the contrasts that run heavily throughout Paul's life, and throughout the novel, allow Paul to learn more about himself and his limitations. Thankfully, through Keller, Paul is to learn that his ego is not fatal, unlike Keller. Paul learns for himself that he is 'one in a thousand', not as

Keller said 'one in a million'. Paul is left, with the death of Keller, with a loss of innocence, yet a bridge into maturity. Paul has learnt the importance of self-delusion and is left to live out his life in the happy solitude of Melbourne.

Paul's experiences are integral to his learning. Thus, Goldsworthy has used contrast to reflect the gulf of learning. The contrasts allow the audience to see the importance of the central issues of 'Maestro' and of Paul's life, to see the importance of learning one's limitations and not allowing art to lead you to 'a wasted life'. The contrasting elements of setting, characters, and themes accentuate the 'memoirs' of Paul's life as he is left 'dissatisfied' with his musical achievements, yet able to understand that he remains a success in life 'Endlessly, effortlessly'.

Average Responses

Average responses tended to resort to listing various contrasts with minimal or haphazard associations with issues. They concentrated on character as their primary driving force or chose issues that were unsophisticated or obvious.

These responses were able to recognise both aspects of the question but lacked the smooth integration of 'A' range scripts. They consistently addressed the question, had a wide-ranging knowledge of the text, integrated a reasonable band of quotations, showed an awareness of how characters changed and often displayed empathy with Paul. They often looked at the role of contrast as a didactic tool used by the author to help characters learn and grow. A clear, often methodical, structure was evident.

An Average Response

'One of the main ideas of Peter Goldsworthy's novel is the idea of learning. Goldsworthy uses contrasts in the novel to great effect, so that the reader can observe the differences in 'life', so he can follow the characters on their journeys throughout the novel.

One of the most obvious instances of contrast in *Maestro* is that of Paul's parents. He himself describes them as 'the black and white keys on a keyboard'. The fact that Paul also sees himself as a 'crossbreed' further illustrates this fact. Although Paul's parents seem to be complete opposites, they do get along very well, perhaps due to their love of music or 'the sweet sticky glue of sex'. The fact that Paul's parents stay together reflects the important role of art in society. Wherever Paul's parents go, they instantly move into the musical society. Their love for music seems to overcome the fact that they disagree on almost everything.

Keller can also be seen as a contrast, a rather obvious one, to both the setting of Darwin and the characters with whom he lives, where 'Bach was the sound that dogs made, Chopin the function of an axe'. Keller has come from Vienna, regarded as one of the most artistic places in the world, and yet now Keller lives in Darwin, described as 'the terminus' and 'a city of booze, blow and blasphemy'. Keller stands out as an immediate contrast, with his pressed linen suit and 'absurdly in that climate, a jacket and tie'.

The fact that Keller has left what many people think to be a great city, to come to one which has little or no artistic appeal, at least for Keller, raises questions in the reader's mind, and encourages him or her to think why a successful concert pianist is now living in Darwin. There are many contrasts in 'Maestro' that serve to teach the characters, especially Paul, about life, and to proceed from the arrogant, self centred life he led in the beginning, to being mature, and being able to accept that he is in fact 'One in a thousand' not 'one in a million'.

When Paul is obsessed with Megan, mainly with her physical attributes, he denies the spiritual, and rejects Rosie, seeing her as annoying as a buzzing fly. He fails to see that they share a common interest, a love of music. When Paul learns how shallow a relationship with Megan is, 'the sum of that beauty was somehow less in parts', he also learns that sex is nothing without love. The contrast between Megan and Rosie is also that between love and lust. Paul realises that all he felt for Megan was lust, and that made sex for him shallow and unsatisfying. Sex with Rosie, on the other hand, was an expression of their love for each other, and so it had depth and was rewarding for both of them.

The contrast between the music styles, rock and classical, also serves to teach Paul how to get reward in life, rather than just a shallow experience. Through Paul's brief association with 'Rough Stuff', he realises that because of 'the sheer hurt of the music', and the lack of depth present, such as the monosyllabic words to the music, that rock is nothing more than 'music to shit by'. The experience did not leave a sense of achievement in Paul, 'did we have to play a single note to win? Probably not'. It was 'all too easy' for Paul. Classical music is what Paul really loves, seeing it as 'nearer to lovemaking than music'. He knows that classical music must be worked at in order to achieve which gives it depth and character, and so ultimately can retain Paul's interest, as opposed to the shallow, hurtful rock music.

Rick Whiteley is also a contrast to Keller. He seems to be in music only for the money, which is 'exactly why he joined 'Rough Stuff''. He wants to exploit Jimmy and Scottie for his own personal benefit. He does not teach the band members about music, and what joy can be resultant from it. His motivation here is only wealth and personal gain. Keller, however, teaches Paul what music is all about to him. He wants Paul to succeed, just as he did, only without making the mistakes that he did. His hardness on Paul, he later learns, was 'a father's hardness'. Keller loves Paul and wants him to love life, no matter what the outcome, which is exactly what Paul does. He chooses love over music, and is still able to enjoy life 'Endlessly, effortlessly'.

Contrast, therefore, is a very important aspect in 'Maestro'. It presents the issues that Goldsworthy was trying to present in his novel. It allows the reader to see two opposite aspects of these issues, and learn from them, just as Paul does.'

Below Average Responses

Below average responses tended towards listings of contrasts or of issues with little interplay between the two. They had an awareness of the centrality of Paul but did little to go beyond simple discussion of themes or aspects of growing up. They were often unbalanced in their understanding of the novel, limiting their discussion to the domain of 'love versus lust', the influence of older characters on growing up or the various manifestations of love itself. The obvious contrasts or rock 'n' roll and classical music or the main settings were noted but not developed. Expression was often laboured or pedestrian.

A Below Average Response

‘Paul joins the Rock band, ‘Rough Stuff’ and goes off to compete in ‘The Battle of the Bands’. Goldsworthy allows Paul to take two extremes. One, to play piano at a classical level, and the second, to have it easy by playing a simple 12 bar blues pattern continuously in the Rock band.

Goldsworthy has again used contrast to explore one of the central issues. Music. By contrasting the styles of music, Paul now has the choice of what, musically, he wants to do with his life. Goldsworthy has deliberately contrasted Rock to classical to make Paul aware of his choices and his happiness, something that the stubborn, and immature Paul did not seem to realise.’

Well Below Average Responses

Well below averages responses showed a very limited understanding of the text and had difficulty in providing more than a few obvious examples.

Question 26

Gillian Mears, *Fineflour*

‘I feel the river and all its moodiness, holding me up.’

What is the role of the river in *Fineflour*?

Above Average Responses

Above average responses discussed the layered meanings and functions of the river in the text. They showed a thorough knowledge and perceptive understanding of the text and an ability to integrate the question and the quotation.

Average Responses

Average responses had a simplistic view of the question and the text. Responses in this range tended to be brief and to make obvious and limited parallels between the characters and the river.

Question 27

Jessica Anderson, *Tirra Lirra by the River*

Anderson’s novel sets up a conflict between the imagined life and the life that is lived.

How well, in your view, is that conflict resolved?

Few candidates attempted this question.

PART C — DRAMA (UNIQUE)

Overview

The questions varied in several ways, with the focus ranging from character development, to themes and dramatic structure. The superior responses were able to fully address the questions through a discussion of the dramatic interest of the play. Such interpretations were sophisticated and often inspired, skilfully integrating quotations and relevant reference to the text. As would be expected, the better answers displayed an awareness of audience and the impact of theatrical devices in shaping audience response.

Marking Guidelines

A Range 15, 14, 13 — Well Above Average

- A sophisticated interpretation of the question and strong insight into the play as a whole.
- A strong sense of dramatic purpose, technique and audience is evident.
- A sophisticated, coherent, unified argument well supported with aptly chosen, effectively integrated examples from the text.
- Demonstrates originality and flair in expression and in response to the question.

B Range 12, 11, 10 — Above Average

- Demonstrates a clear understanding of the play and the key elements of the question.
- Conveys a very good knowledge and understanding of the play as a dramatic experience and shows an appreciation of the playwright's use of language and its impact.
- Presents a strong, sustained argument supported by well chosen examples from the play however, some of the responses may exhibit inconsistencies in structure and expression at the lower end of the range.
- These are articulate, proficient responses which contain flashes of insight and are without the flair and precision of the A range.

C Range 9, 8, 7 — Average

- Addresses the more obvious aspects of the question and offers a simplistic interpretation of it.
- Demonstrates a sound knowledge of the play but with a tendency to focus narrowly on character and plot rather than the play as a whole.
- There is an attempt to develop a line of argument and provide supporting evidence through the use of quotations and reference to appropriate incidents.
- These are competent in knowledge, understanding and expression but argue in a more generalised way than responses in the above average range.

D Range 6, 5, 4 — Below Average

- Provides a limited and sometimes inaccurate interpretation of the question and the text.
- Demonstrates knowledge of the play, but does not apply it appropriately to the question.
- Ideas are more likely to be simplistic with little substantiation or development.
- Likely to contain irrelevancies and inaccuracies. Lacks sufficient content or is incomplete.
- In this range expression may be articulate or it may be quite poor. Inconsistencies in organisation may be apparent.

E Range 3, 2, 1 — Well Below Average

- Exhibits difficulty in grappling with the question.
- Insufficient knowledge and/or seriously flawed interpretation of the play.
- Very brief/poorly organised.
- Material irrelevant to the play or the question.

Question 28. William Shakespeare, *Measure For Measure*

‘The men in ‘Measure For Measure’ are cowards and frauds; only the women have strength and honesty’.

Do you agree? Give your reasons.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses presented a synthesised and sophisticated discussion of the question. They examined the complex moral issues raised by the question and gave a balanced analysis of a range of characters. Their responses displayed an awareness of dramatic techniques, fluently integrating their quotations in a well sustained argument.

An Above Average Response

‘The Duke is also worthy of this label. To begin with his palming off of power to Angelo to enforce the laws is somewhat cowardly. He fears his own instigation would have proved ‘too powerful’. He becomes a symbol of what is false in his disguise, becoming what Lucio calls ‘the old fantastical Duke of dark corners’. His conviction that ‘against vice I must apply’ is also somewhat dubious as is his appetite for dramatic revelations – ‘for tis a physic that’s bitter to a sweet end’. His withholding of the ‘heavenly comforts’ that Claudio is alive from Isabella is also condemnable. All this belies the fact the Duke is as he describes himself – ‘a soldier and a statesman’. He is not as virtuous as he seems, Shakespeare uses Lucio’s stinging insults as a comic highlight of the Dukes on pompous imperfections. Perhaps he is even as much a fraud as Angelo for he too consents to the ‘dribbling dart of love’ in his proposal to Isabella.’

Average Responses

These responses had a tendency to have a narrow focus, often discussing only one aspect of the question. Their discussion was superficial, lacking in detailed reference to the text and an appreciation of the dramatic concerns of the play. Quotations were often irrelevant and despite a sound knowledge of the play, the argument may have lacked cohesion.

An Average Response

‘Isabella is a character in ‘Measure for Measure’ who reveals her true nature of honesty and integrity as a result of Claudio’s sentence. As she is about to enter a nunnery when we are first introduced to her character, the audience immediately views her as a devoted woman of God. Her virtuosity is further revealed when she asks the poor Clare Nuns for even more strictness, and thus we see she has absolute values and is extremely strict in her beliefs.’

Below Average Responses

Below average responses presented simplistic views and gave an unbalanced discussion dealing with only one aspect of the question. They generally commented superficially on the characters’ actions and gave little relevant reference to the play.

Question 29 Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *School for Scandal*

Comment on Sheridan's use of scandal, 'the envenom'd tongue of slander', in 'The School for Scandal'.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses analysed Sheridan's use of scandal, perceiving it as a vehicle for humour, wit and satire, as well as a means of exploring the conventions of the comedy of manners. Responses in this range clearly addressed the implications of the dramatic use of scandal through a discussion of exaggerated characterisation, absurdity, ridicule and irony.

An Above Average Response

'The play opens with 'A School for Scandal? Tell me – I beseech you. Needs there a school this modish art to teach you'. This is a clear indication that the play is suggesting that slander and gossip does not need to be 'taught' as it is in human nature. This indicates that Sheridan is holding a mirror up to society. Through ridiculing the gossips, Sheridan is mocking society. However, this is done in a humorous light, through the laughable exaggerated characterisation of the gossips. The only true moralising comes from Maria, who occasionally makes a sentimental remark against 'the set'. Maria, believes 'their malice' to be 'intolerable', and since the scandals are a reflection on society at the time, Maria is disliked. This is because she is not only scorning the audience, but is also engendering a serious note into what the audience may simply enjoy as a light hearted comedy. Therefore, though the scandals are chiefly for humorous purposes they are also used by Sheridan to gently mock society, and expose human foibles.'

Average Responses

Average responses generally discussed the use of scandal in relation to the themes of the play. While such responses showed an awareness of Sheridan's concerns, they lacked a holistic understanding of the play.

An Average Response

'R.B. Sheridan's 'A School for Scandal' uses scandal in order to tie in the key themes of the play and present his comic criticism of his society. The scandal in the book is a source of comedy, which allows Sheridan to humorously show his criticism of the society. The 3 main themes in the play are all linked to scandal in the play, and this ideal draws three parallel plot lines together.'

Below Average Responses

Below average responses revealed a superficial understanding of the play and Sheridan's concerns and found difficulty in addressing the playwright's 'use of scandal.' Many were characterised by poor expression and brevity.

Question 30. Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

Does the play convince us Nora was right to leave her husband and children, or not? Give your reasons.

Above Average Responses

The above average responses used the question as a springboard for a discussion of Nora's development throughout the play. They showed an acute awareness of dramatic purpose, contrast, symbolism and stagecraft, conveying how such elements stylistically contributed to the portrayal of Nora's transformation.

An Above Average Response

'From the play's opening, the audience is shocked at the marriage game that they play: there are set rules and 'roles'. Towald has cast himself as the protector, provider and 'man of the house', whose duty is to stop Nora, his 'songbird' and 'squirrel' from being frivolous and to control her as a child, with arbitrary rules such as forbidding her to eat macaroons. Nora, likewise, plays her role as wife and mother and 'child' to Towald, which is evidenced in her movements around him: she often 'claps her hands' or 'puts her hand over his mouth'. The falsity and illusion of their relationship comes to light further once we are able to compare it with the open, honest relationship of equals that Kristine and Krogstad develop. Their relationship dramatically parallels that of Nora and Towald in that just after Kristine and Krogstad sit at the table at centre stage in Act III to discuss their relationship, Nora and Towald do the same thing. The gross differences between their interaction is effectively juxtaposed which throws a favourable light on Nora's brave decision to go out into the darkness so that she can begin to truly 'understand herself' and her society. Kristine and Krogstad's relationship has the force of reality; as Kristine says herself: 'Life and hard, bitter reality have taught me that' and Kristine realises that all the 'lies and evasions' in the Helmer's marriage cannot continue.'

Average Responses

Average responses tended to adopt a chronological approach in describing Nora's response to situations at certain intervals in the play. They lacked an appreciation of the dramatic qualities and Ibsen's concerns.

An Average Response

'Nora faces a minor crisis at the end of each act – first the feeling that she has contaminated her children after hearing Towald's views on a home built on lies and deception, then facing the truth, that the miracle will not happen and she has only thirty one hours to live. It is not until the end of Act II that Nora actually makes a decision on her own – that she will kill herself. This shows a woman who has been led by others her whole life, unsure of what to do when a crisis occurs.'

Below Average Responses

Below average responses were simplistic and poorly substantiated, showing a superficial knowledge of the play and an inadequate engagement with the question.

Question 31. Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

‘Illusion and reality become so confused in the play that it loses meaning — for characters and audience alike’.

What meaning can you find in the play?

Candidates were required to examine illusion and reality in relation to audience and character, and explore the implications of this, for the meaning of the play. Various aspects of theatricality were required to be analysed in this context with responses showing an understanding of dramatic devices such as the play within the play, the theatre of the absurd, language, paradox, a range of humour and pastiche.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses were well integrated explaining how the confusion between illusion and reality clarifies the meaning of the play. These candidates demonstrated a sophisticated interpretation of the play, conveying an insight into the use of the absurd as a vehicle for Stoppard’s more serious concerns.

An Above Average Response

‘Stoppard cleverly employs juxtaposition of scenes between ‘Hamlet’ and his own text, which creates vertiginous shifts that accurately mirror the confusing environment which faces the individual in the Twentieth century. Illusion and reality blend to form an incomprehensible world, which itself is expressive of the fundamental meaning in the play. The strange forces at work within the world of the play, and the cessation of the terms of reason, are vividly demonstrated through the game of coin-tossing with which the play begins, and where heads fall successively an incredible number of times. It seems as Guildenstern comments, that ‘the only beginning is birth, the only end is death, if you can’t count on that, what can you count on?’. Everything in between resembles a confusion of disconnected events.’

Average Responses

Average responses addressed the more obvious aspects of the question, identifying points for discussion, rather than analysing and developing their line of argument. Often, these students did not address the opening statement but focused on the meaning of the play through a thorough, but pedestrian, discussion of themes, such as death, lack of purpose, lack of identity and the role of fate.

An Average Response

‘There is a focus on direction and explanation in life, and on the roles that are played by humans, alluding to the ‘play-life’ metaphor. There is a contrast developed through the different outlooks adopted by Ros and Guil, and the ‘Tragedians’. Ros and Guil are constantly confused and questioning, ‘what in God’s name are we supposed to do?’ whilst the players are content with the roles that they have to play.’

(Examiner’s note: reference to ‘Ros and Guil’ is not to be encouraged).

Below Average Responses

While it was apparent that students had a knowledge of the play, they experienced difficulty in addressing the question. Their responses were often confused because they lacked the ability to express their ideas through a clearly structured argument.

Question 32. Dylan Thomas, *Under Milkwood*

‘Life is but a dream.’

Is life celebrated, or only the illusion of it, in *Under Milkwood*?

Above Average Responses

Above average responses addressed both aspects of the question, often challenging the notion that the play was an illusion, cogently arguing that Thomas celebrates life through his characters and their use of language. Such responses delighted in the eccentricities of the characters, showing an appreciation of Thomas’ acceptance of human strength and follies.

An Above Average Response

‘The variation in language where dialogue and verse are interwoven with prose and songs contributes to the realism of the town. We feel as though we are there and can conjure up pictures of Mrs Ogmore-Pritchard at ‘trig and trim Bayview’ or Gossamer Beynon as she ‘high heels’ out of school. Moreover, Thomas uses language to change the pace and mood of the play, the morning sequence ‘as busy as bees’ contrasts to the lilting afternoon sequence which ‘yawns and moons’. Thus, Thomas creates a town that is almost alive and ‘breathing’ coupled with the multiplicity of characters who all play an integral role in the life of the town. Thomas only emphasises one prominent feature in all his characters and hence, the listeners can almost picture what they look like. Really Garter is continually associated with ‘May milk’ and observes ‘isn’t life terrible, thank God!’, whilst No-good Boyo completely inept, fishes up a ‘whale bone corset’ and is constantly associated with his childhood, demonstrated most aptly in the dream sequence.’

Average Responses

Average responses almost exclusively focussed on the ‘celebration’ aspect of the question demonstrating their point of view through their discussion of the characters. The structure of these

scripts and their use of quotations was often predictable, despite a sound knowledge of the play. A discussion of language was often superficial or neglected.

An Average Response

‘Under Milk Wood discusses several aspects of life, such as birth, marriage, death and religion. Thomas celebrates these things by creating a humorous account of a day in the life of the townspeople of Llareggub. The radio play is intended to be humorous and entertaining. While Dylan Thomas celebrates life, he encourages the reader not to take the events and the characters of the play too seriously. In some ways, this may be celebrating an ‘illusion of life’, however, the reader interprets the trivial and silly nature of the play and relates it to life – and thus Thomas celebrates life itself, as opposed to the illusion of it.’

Below Average Responses

Below average responses focused on events rather than what the characters showed about life. While they may have covered a range of characters, their discussion lacked depth and detailed reference to the play.

Question 33. Dorothy Hewett, *The Man from Mukinupin*

Few candidates attempted this question.

Question 34. Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls*

How does Churchill represent the politics of women’s lives?

Above Average Responses

Above average responses showed sophisticated understanding of the uneven distribution of power in women’s lives and how Churchill dramatically explores this through her use of unconventional structure, characterisation, symbolism, contrast and language.

An Above Average Response

‘Churchill’s ‘Top Girls’ concerns itself primarily with women’s politics, in its post-modern deconstruction of theatrical convention. She abandons the male derived conventions of a play which climaxes, preferring to establish a dialectic, and she provides an all-female cast which asserts the right of a female character to exist solely rather than in connection with a male. The first Act of the play defies temporal and spatial limitations by bringing successful women together from history and culture—Art. Churchill critiques the way women relate to one another, and also questions the validity of individual feminism and of feminism which merely promotes patriarchal values. The office workers – Marlene, Win and Nell, are used as symbols of female success, and Churchill contrasts them poignantly with the slow-witted Angie.’

Average Responses

Average responses showed a limited understanding of the key expression ‘politics of women’s lives’; however, they demonstrated sound knowledge of the play and an appreciation of the characters as representatives of particular social groups.

An Average Response

‘The Win and Louise interview shows the audience that these things are more possible for men. Louise feels she has to lower her age in order to acquire a job. Also we notice that marriage and children seem to be a hindrance to success. Win implies that it is the women that have to move on when a breakdown of relationships occurs at the workplace. The fact that she has seen ‘younger men pass (her)’ shows the oppression of women all undermines the statement. ‘We’ve all come a long way. Louise perceives the new working woman as someone ‘who is 30 now and grew up in a different climate’. We see that when women do reach the heights of success they reproduce the practices that have traditionally suppressed them.’

Below Average Responses

Below average responses experienced difficulty addressing the implications of the term ‘politics’ and often lapsed into a description of characters. Often the treatment of the play was uneven with a tendency to focus on Marlene’s relationship with the characters in the first act.

Question 35. Louis Nowra, *Cosi*

‘In *Cosi* all is far from being as simple as it seems.’

Is it? Comment on the play’s apparent but deceptive simplicity.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses presented a lucid argument with a strong insight into the play, integrating a discussion of language and dramatic purpose. Those students were able to engage with the play’s humour as well as display an appreciation of the tragic elements of the play.

An Above Average Response

‘Indeed, in ‘*Cosi*’, all is ‘far from being as simple’ as it seems. Whilst the play contains an ostensible simplicity, it is largely deceptive. Using characters, and creating a plot that seems simple, Nowra deals with important and complex issues, some of which explore undercurrents of the Australian psyche. These issues include love, the mentally ill and the issue of what is really important in a life. Admittedly, ‘*Cosi*’ is, at first appearance, a simple play. It is the story, of a young somewhat ‘naïve’ university student, who takes on the job of directing a performance featuring the inmates of a mental institute, because ‘I need the money’. Despite some humorous moments in which it appears as though the production will not succeed, the patients ultimately come through with ‘flying colours’ and the night of the performance and the play ends soon after. ‘Sounds simple’ doesn’t it?

This apparent simplicity is compounded by the simple, sometimes slapstick humour employed by Nowra, alluded to above. There is the slick one liner, an example of which is Doug responding to

Justin's question of what the world would be like without social workers: 'In tip-top condition'. There is also the often comical, but cruel, remarks the patients exchange ('go burn a cat', 'bye, fat dog'). There is the farcical anecdote, such as Cherry's recollection of her duck-hunting expeditions with her father. Much humour is also created by means of Doug's vulgar remarks, such as complimenting Lucy on her 'great tits'. To many, such humour might be seen as 'cheap laughs'.

However, beneath the apparently simple facade of the play, lies a work that deals with a number of important, and indeed complex, issues. One of these is love. Nowra does much to challenge the traditional conceptions of love. A number of the patients have formed their own views on love. Julie likens love to 'hallucinating without drugs'. Cherry suggests that 'women fight hard to keep men out of their pants'; and Roy, extraordinarily, says that 'love is what you feel when you don't have enough emotion left to hate'. In doing so, Nowra gives to an audience a number of different views of love. There is also the 'play within the play', 'Cosi Fan Tutte', a Mozart Opera which explores the issues of love and (women's) fidelity. In many ways, 'Cosi Fan Tutte' parallels that of 'Cosi'.

The somewhat idealistic views of love expressed by the patients are contrasted to the views of Lucy and Nick. Lucy says that 'love is an emotional indulgence for the privileged few'. Nick can't believe the choice of production for the patients. 'A ... Mozart Opera.'. Lucy later makes an amazing distinction for Lewis, telling him that: 'I have sex with him (Nick) and sleep with you'. Such an advanced exploration of the issue of love and fidelity is not the hallmark of a 'simple' play.

Perhaps an even more central issue explored by the play is the mentally ill, and society's attitude towards them. Nowra certainly challenges preconceived stereotypes. Although the patients each have their own, distinct, serious problems, such as Roy's wildly fluctuating moods, Doug's pyromania, and Ruth's obsession with the contrasting concepts of illusion and reality, the very fact that a bunch of 'right-wing nuts', as Nick calls them, and in particular, Henry, can put on a production of one of opera's most complex performances, certainly challenges society's attitudes to the mentally ill. Indeed, the patients seem to possess a certain charm that is totally lacking in the characters of Lucy and Nick. Nowra juxtaposes the patients with Lucy and Nick, to pose an important question to the audience: what, or who, is insane? The patients', most certainly, appear the more favourable.

Even the wisdom of Julie, who gives a number of profound insights, is contrasted with Lucy's ignorance concerning love.

Another issue related to this, which again is suggestive of a more complex core to a play that is apparently 'simple', is that of the question; what is really important in life? The audience is presented with a number of different desires from different characters. For Nick and Lucy, their wish is to 'radicalise the nation'. Even Lewis says, at the play's beginning, that his motivation for doing the production is his need for money. These aims or desires are contrasted with the wants of the patients. Each of them seeks some sort of emotional connection to others which is lacking in their lives at present. Roy's character displays signs of somebody who suffers from deep unhappiness. Julie cannot live life without drugs; without them, she is in 'limbo'; yet she develops a close bond with Lewis, suggestive of her need for love. Cherry is a portrait of a desperate woman who does not conform to society's idea of an acceptable woman. She seeks the companionship of Lewis in somewhat of a pathetic fashion. The play suggests that it is emotional connection, not fame and fortune, which is really important in life.

The play explores the transformation of Lewis from a man under the influence of his ‘friends’, who says that ‘love is not so important nowadays’, to someone who gains a real insight into how ‘the other half live’.

Average Responses

Average responses tended to focus on themes and characters arguing that the play is not ‘simple’ because of the play’s themes, love and fidelity. Their choice of quotations often failed to enhance their argument.

An Average Response

‘Roy says these things about love which indicates a very traumatised life. As most of the patients have been in institutions for some time when Lewis uncovers more truths about them their meaning is far from simple. Ruth is another character with many complexities. She becomes obsessed about the number of steps she has to take in her scene. What seems a simple task for her, produces many difficulties, and also difficulties for Lewis.’

Below Average Responses

Below average responses had a knowledge of the play but often misinterpreted the question, particularly the term, ‘deceptive simplicity’. They tended to attribute ‘deceptive’ to the character. For example, ‘Nick was deceptive’ and often confused simplicity with ‘simplistic’.

Question 36. Katherine Thomson, *Diving For Pearls*

‘Never ever in my entire life has the right thing happened at the right time’.

Do you feel sympathy for Barbara, or not? Give your reasons.

Above Average Responses

Above average responses empathised with Barbara, identifying her as a victim of economic forces and appreciating her vitality, optimistic determination and caustic humour. Students engaged strongly with the question and demonstrated how dramatic devices contributed to the audience’s response to her. Above average responses were able to reconcile the problematic aspects of Barbara’s character (her treatment of Verge and Den) through a discussion of her lack of self-awareness and her desperation to improve her lot.

An Above Average Response

‘The demise of Den and Barbara’s relationship offers an intense, bleak, examination of human relationships. The audience once again find themselves sympathising with Barbara, but mostly Den. When Den confronts Barbara with the truth of the new image she has superficially created for herself, ‘a tired old tart with illusions of something else’, the audience’s sympathy grows for

Barbara. Her failure to see herself, to recognise the truth is harshly brought upon her. She has been so caught up in creating her 'new self', that she loses sight of what is 'appropriate'. Unable to cope with the truth she accuses Den of the worst possible thing she can think of, 'Don't you wop it up her from time to time?'. There is bleak hope for the future. Den has changed but Barbara has not gained self-awareness, her life is no better than at the start of the play, and this causes a great sense of despair within the audience.'

Average Responses

Average responses discussed the negative aspects of Barbara's character and agreed with the question. Such responses tended to focus on her failure as a woman, mother and lover, arguing a fairly simplistic interpretation of the question. Some responses degenerated into moralising.

An Average Response

'Another factor that stops her from receiving sympathy from the audience is the way she treats her daughter Verge. We are aware that 'she left me but now we're back together' as Verge puts it, but when she first arrives she is greeted by 'she can't stay here... this is a crucial stage in my life'.

This demolishes any form of sympathy the reader has created for her as her selfishness towards her own daughter is so clearly displayed.'

Below Average Responses

Below average responses provided a very limited interpretation of the play in the light of the question. These responses often had difficulty in separating personal standards from a critical interpretation of the play.

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