

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2009 question paper
for the guidance of teachers

0486 LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/03

Paper 3 (Alternative to Coursework), maximum raw mark 20

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes must be read in conjunction with the question papers and the report on the examination.

- CIE will not enter into discussions or correspondence in connection with these mark schemes.

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Guides to Assessment

In this Syllabus we aim at encouraging students to make some personal response to their reading. That means that, whilst we may have legitimate expectations as to the ground most answers must occupy, we must at all times be prepared to meet them on their chosen ground. It is to be hoped that candidates will see on occasion other possibilities.

Hence we must at all times tease out what the candidate is trying to say to us. We must recognise that it is possible for a candidate whose technical command of English is limited, but whose language still manages to communicate understanding, to receive high marks. Nor should we reward fluency and display of literary terms if we feel that there is little evidence of such understanding. Remember that we are looking for response to literature, not demonstration of language skills.

It is vital that we constantly remind ourselves that this is unseen work and we should not be overcritical of an occasional false note or misunderstanding. We are marking the quality of the process of engaging with literature, and not merely assessing the accuracy or otherwise of the conclusions reached. Above all, we should be alert to any response to the affective power of the words, however it might be expressed.

Reference to the photostat script discussed during coordination will be crucial to maintaining the standard throughout the marking process.

The notes that follow on each question are for general guidance – they are *not* rigid prescriptions of 'required content'.

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General Descriptors

The descriptors are an attempt to guide examiners to an understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or 'typical' of work in the band. Together with the marking notes specific to the passage/poem set, they form a means of general guidance.

Band 9	0–1	The answer does not meet the criteria for Band 8
Band 8	2–3	Candidates will – Show just a very little awareness of
Band 7	4–5	Candidates will – make a few straightforward points about....
Band 6	6–8	Candidates will – make some straightforward points about... show a little understanding of
Band 5	9–11	Candidates will – begin to develop a response..... show some understanding of....
Band 4	12–14	Candidates will – make a sensible response.... show reasonable understanding of.... show a little awareness of the way language works.
Band 3	15–17	Candidates will – make a considered, sustained response. show clear understanding of show some awareness of the way language works....
Band 1/2	18–20	Candidates will – sustain a perceptive, convincing response show extensive understanding respond sensitively to the way language works

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This is a working document; it is not exhaustive; it does not provide “correct” answers. The Notes can only provide “best guesses” about how the question will work out, and it is subject to revision after we have looked at a wide range of scripts. The comments on the individual grades are intended to add flesh to the descriptors in the generic mark-scheme.

General Notes on Question 1

Kevin Ireland, the New Zealand poet, wrote this rather Audenesque poem. Responses to the man he describes might vary from those who feel he is the victim of a soulless urban work culture to those who feel that he is, to put it crudely, a wimp. As always, we should accept any such judgement, although perhaps the most thoughtful will see elements of both in the poem.

Discrimination is likely to come from the sensitivity with which candidates respond to individual words such as “swayed”, “throttling”, “yawned” and “snufflings”. Each one of these words is worthy of some consideration as is the wry humour in such combinations “he gargled an instant coffee” and “yawned, ‘We are lost.’” There might also be differences in the levels of sophistication of their responses to “the battlefields of sleep”. Some might see the sexual connotations of his “romances bold and blue” behind the more obvious reference to knightly adventures. Some might respond to the circular structure as the poem ends, as it began, “at dawn”. For the highest marks we should see some understanding and thought about stanza 5.

Marks 2–5

Answers here might make a few straightforward points about the life of the man in the poem. It will generally be a simple, undeveloped picture, either with little direct reference to the words of the poem or much copying out of the words, without commentary of any sort. The candidate in this range may refer mostly to what the man *does* in the poem, rather than what one can deduce about his thoughts and feelings. The answer is also likely to be very brief.

Marks 6–8

Answers will show a very elementary understanding of what is wrong with the man’s life. Candidates will make a simple response to the first question. However, sometimes the response, though personal, will not quite fit the words of the poem and candidates may get sidetracked into leaving the words of the poem and writing their own views of the tyrannies of work or their own aspirations. Conversely, the candidate might attempt a half-hearted paraphrase without any real response to the words of the poem except at their most literal meaning. Such answers may concentrate on the external actions of the man: i.e. getting up in a rush, running to work, going slowly back again and going to sleep, without seeing the force behind some of the words describing the actions.

Marks 9–11

There will in this mark range be a tendency to concentrate on the man’s external actions, but there should also be evidence of some contact with the way the poem is written. The comments on language, however, will not usually be explicitly developed. For example, there may be a reference to the frenetic start to his day and there may be a simple quotation from stanza 2 to illustrate this, but there will not be further commentary on the choice of words. There should be a reasonable understanding of the thrust of the poem and a simple statement of opinion about the way the man lives his life.

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Marks 12–14

There should be reference to all three bullet points. There should be a clear understanding of the life of the man and a response to what is lacking in it. There should be elementary comment on the writer's choice of words and an elementary response to his dreams and the contrast with the "truth at dawn". We should not expect a very developed or coherent response to the writing at this stage, just sufficient to show some awareness of the writer at work.

Marks 15–17

We should expect a more thorough analysis of language in this mark range. Answers should clearly see the contrast between the man's behaviour in the morning and that at the end of the working day. There should be a developed response, whatever it is, to the life that he leads and probably also to his personality. Above all, in this mark range we should expect to see closer examination of the words that the poet uses and some attempt to deal with the ironies, for example in the third stanza.

Marks 18–20

We will expect a very clear understanding of the main thrust of the poem, of course, but, it is to be hoped, a sensitive response to both the sadness of the situation as it has been described and a response to some of the humour. There may also be useful responses to the poet's use of direct speech at critical moments in the poem, especially on the last occasion when, it seems, the man faces the real truth about his life, as he does every morning, before his hectic round begins yet again. There may be an awareness of the simple structure of the poem, the rhyme scheme and the repetition of "and" at the beginning of several alternate lines. We might enjoy a more advanced exploration of his nightly (alliterative) exploits. It is hoped that candidates will have fun with this poem, while responding to its rather terrifying pathos.

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General Notes on Question 2

There is much to explore in this passage. The bullet points suggest one way of dividing up the passage for exploration, but many candidates will want to look first of all at the humour and then at the sadness. The humour is mostly at a simple level, the sadness more difficult to access. As often, of course, the humour also accentuates the sadness – but we will expect this insight only from the very best candidates.

The passage is from Kiran Desai's powerful novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*. Much of the humour derives from the family's rather primitive knowledge of telecommunications and their unbridled, perhaps impertinent curiosity about their neighbour and his connection with the wider world. However, their interference which disastrously exacerbates the failure of the father's attempt to have a meaningful conversation with his son, is based to a great extent on a warm-hearted wish to be helpful and their vivacity is quite appealing.

The dialogue, slightly off-puttingly presented in upper case with grotesque punctuation, is both humorous and sad. The reason for the upper case is obvious and most candidates will probably refer to it as humorous. The sadness comes from the banality of the conversation and the desperate desire of each participant to reassure the other that there are no problems. So, each is unsatisfied. It is summed up both humorously and poignantly by everyone saying, "Ahh, everything all right...Everything all right? Everything all right." But as Desai writes, "After all, even on clichéd phrases, you could hoist true emotion." Finally, the conversation ends, as it began, with a heart-stopping repetition of "HELLO?"

The last bullet point might prove the most difficult. It is hoped that more able candidates will be able to respond to Biju's moving synaesthetic (the use of that adjective is not expected) evocation of his homeland, alluded to again when the phone went dead, and to the use of words like "trembling" to describe the father's feelings directly and his fear of "the loss of a precious second with his son." There are many more such indications scattered throughout the extract, reminding one that, in spite of the broad humour, there is an intense pathos running throughout.

In the final resort, the best answers should be able to respond to the way Desai suggests the unbridgeable space between the father and son at many various different levels and in many different ways.

Marks 2–5

Candidates will show a little awareness of what the passage is about and perhaps make a very elementary response to the humour of the family's interference. We will not expect much of a response to the sadness of the situation, beyond a simple statement of the fact that they cannot hear each other properly. The answer is also likely to be very brief.

Marks 6–8

Candidates will mostly respond to what happens in the extract rather than the way it is described. They may make an elementary response to the interference of the family and may make some comment on the repetitions in the dialogue, but we will not expect much more sophistication than this. We may expect poorly directed narratives and paraphrases in this mark range with candidates hoping that the Examiner will appreciate the pathos and humour just by their retelling the story.

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Marks 9–11

If there are narratives, for a mark in this range the style of retelling and/or selection of material clearly indicate that there has been some response, though not explicitly detailed, to the language of the extract. There will still be an emphasis, however, on *what* the characters say and do rather on the way this has been described. We will expect no explicit comment on language in this mark range. We will, however, expect some rudimentary response to both the humour and the pathos of the passage and coverage of at least two of the bullet points.

Marks 12–14

There should be a reasonable understanding of the situation in the passage and some explicit commentary of *how* the writer makes it both amusing and sad. We shall, however, expect comments to be very rudimentary in this mark range. There might be reference to the upper case to present the shouting between father and son. There might be an exploration of the details of the interaction between the watchman's wife and her children as they try to steady the wire. We might expect comments on the sadness to be less developed and clear, but we will look for an awareness that their dialogue gets nowhere and references to the words that suggest the emotion that father and son are feeling.

Marks 15–17

There will be a much more developed understanding of the humour of the extract and, more particularly in this range, the sadness. In this range, for example, we might see candidates recognising Biju's homesickness and the way this is expressed. They may look at the reactions of the two when their conversation is curtailed prematurely. We might expect more detailed exploration of the dynamics of the conversation and the reluctance of the father and son to upset each other. There may be just an inkling of the way the humour and the pathos interrelate.

Marks 18–20

We will probably get and welcome many different answers to this question. Answers in this range will probably declare themselves by their sensitivity to what the author is doing in this extract. They will probably show how she manages to communicate the desolation of the space between the father and son and how this is emphasised in the writing in different ways. They should, I hope see the interrelationship between the humour and the sadness. Above all, I hope that we shall see answers which really engage with the writing.