

# WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01  
Coursework

## Key messages

Effective task-setting is essential to success in this component. When framing tasks, teachers should check that the wording allows candidates to meet the relevant assessment criteria.

Teacher annotation of candidate work is an important part of the moderation process, enabling Moderators to see how a Centre's marks have been arrived at.

All relevant paperwork and oral assessments should be checked for accuracy and completeness before submission.

## General comments

In addition to this report, Centres will receive individual reports on their internal moderation of candidate work. This general review draws together the main points contained within the Centre reports.

Cambridge Moderators commented on the high quality of much of the written work they read and the oral assessments they listened to. This testified to the hard work of candidates and their teachers. Candidates clearly enjoyed the texts they studied and engaged thoughtfully with the detail of these texts in their various assessments. One of the distinctive features of the Coursework Portfolio is that candidates demonstrate their appreciation of literature in three different ways: via the critical essay, the written empathic response and the oral recorded conversation. It was pleasing to see a range of texts suitable for study at IGCSE level, and a variety of tasks. In general, the greatest level of choice on the part of candidates was seen in the oral assessments, where candidates had selected character or themes for discussion. There was, in general, less candidate choice evident in critical essays submitted.

The majority of tasks set allowed candidates to meet the relevant criteria for each element of the Portfolio. However, there was some evidence of tasks that did not seem to target the descriptors in the marking tables. Where this was the case, Centres have been asked in centre reports to read the sections on task-setting in the Coursework Training Handbook. More is said about this important aspect of coursework in the sections on the Critical Essay and Empathic Response below.

Centres are to be congratulated on the careful way in which they prepared the coursework folders and oral assessments for submission. Any minor shortcomings in administration have been mentioned in individual Centre reports.

Detailed summative comments on candidate record forms – or, in the case of written work, at the end of assignments - are an essential part of the process. Where comments draw on the wording of the relevant assessment criteria, it is possible for a Centre to justify its award of a particular mark. Written assignments should not be submitted as fair copies; there should be evidence of focused ticking of valid points together with concise marginal annotation pointing out strengths and weaknesses of a candidate's performance. Teacher annotation helps to secure more accurate marking and to make the process of moderation more accountable and transparent. The majority of teachers are to be congratulated on their diligent approach in this area. The topics of Marking and Annotation are covered in *Sections 5.5. and 5.6* in the Coursework Training Handbook. This is essential reading for teachers new to the syllabus and to those uncertain of the syllabus requirements.

## **Critical Essay**

The strongest critical essays sustained a perceptive appreciation of the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to convey their meanings and achieve their effects. The descriptors in the top bands

make it clear that there should be a detailed appreciation of aspects of the writing for high performance. The importance of wording tasks carefully is key here, and examples of good (and bad) tasks can be found in the Coursework Training Handbook. Tasks that do not invite an exploration of the writing can limit candidates' performance. For example, the Moderator is unclear about what the precise focus of the task is from the title: 'Father and son relationships in *The Kite Runner*'. The topic is clear enough, but there is no direction for candidates to consider the writing. A more suitably-worded task might be: 'How does Hosseini vividly present father and son relationships in *The Kite Runner*?' The key words 'How?', 'vividly' and 'present' together require candidates to demonstrate higher order skills of analysis and move them away from mere description. Similarly, titles of assignments that are simply the titles of poems do not provide adequate direction to candidates (or Moderators).

Candidates should write down the task in full at the top of the assignment - not an abbreviation or approximation of it - so that other readers can see how successfully it has been addressed as they read the work.

### **Empathic Response**

In the majority of cases it was clear that Centres had prepared their candidates well for this element of the Portfolio with its emphasis on a more creative approach to literary appreciation. Empathic tasks enable candidates to engage creatively with key aspects such as theme, characterisation and use of language - all channelled through the key moment selected. A key requirement of this task is that candidates select a key moment for their chosen character to 'write their thoughts'. Examples of empathic tasks can be found in the Coursework Training Handbook and also on questions set on drama and prose texts in past papers for the 0486 Literature (English) syllabus.

Some of the strongest empathic responses this series were based on characters from *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus*, and *Metamorphosis*.

In a minority of cases there was some uncertainty about the empathic task. By their very nature, interviews with the chosen character do not allow candidates to *sustain* an appropriate voice. For Band 3, one of the descriptors is: 'sustains a largely authentic voice'. Some candidates regarded their selected moment as the occasion for the mere re-telling of the plot from their character's perspective rather than an opportunity to explore the character's thoughts and feelings.

For these tasks, candidates must include details of both their chosen character and moment at the top of the response so that other readers can gauge how effective the response is to both character and moment.

### **Recorded Conversation**

In the strongest conversations there was an impressive command of the relevant detail, especially given that this is a 'closed book' assessment. At the top end of the range candidates were able to deploy and integrate much well-selected reference in support of perceptive responses to characters or themes. Many candidates were able to sustain the conversation engagingly for the permitted maximum of seven minutes. There were, however, instances of candidates who found it difficult to sustain their conversation beyond five minutes without the discussion becoming increasingly fragmented. Centres are reminded that the upper time limit is not obligatory.

There was much evidence of careful and sensitive use of questioning to allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills of close reading. There was skilful use of prompt questions to help less confident speakers to engage with their chosen area.

Teachers are reminded that oral assessments should be submitted along with the written coursework folders, and clear reference to the assessment criteria should be made on the individual candidate record forms.

# WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/02

Unseen

## Key Messages

- Candidates need to remember that the bullet points are prompts, which are there to help them structure an answer. They are not discrete questions and the focus should always be on the main question.
- Before answering candidates should plan and select material carefully. The endings of poems or passages are often very important and an over-detailed and conscientious answer sometimes does not reach a crucial section of the text.
- Candidates should avoid introductions which merely reiterate the question and bullet points, or do little more than list technical features of the poem or prose out of any meaningful context.
- Candidates should consider literal as well as symbolic or metaphorical interpretations of texts.

## General Comments

The poetry task was more popular than the prose task this series.

There was much evidence that candidates had been carefully prepared for this examination and understood the importance of referring to the language of the text. There were intelligent comments on imagery, diction structure, tone, pace and point of view. In answers to the poetry question, candidates perhaps paid less-than-expected attention to features such as alliteration and onomatopoeia which were used by the poet to convey the immediacy of his experience. There were many carefully considered and thoughtful responses to the structure of the poem which will be considered below. The title *Alone* seems to have led a minority of candidates into over fanciful interpretations, seeing the car accident as a metaphor for emotional problems in the poet's life. Several candidates also thought the car had crashed with fatal outcome rather than ultimately avoiding crashing and merely going into a post. It is possible to interpret the penultimate verse that way, but such a reading misses the positive elements in the language and the fact that the poet is still alive at the end of the poem.

In response to the prose passage there were some perceptive and mature responses. The main discriminator here was the candidates' ability to focus clearly on the points of contrast in Laurence and Harry's feelings. The strongest responses commendably achieved this without over simplifying the complexity of their relationship.

Some responses would have been improved by spending less time demonstrating technical knowledge and more time conveying a thoughtful understanding and a considered personal response, or by engaging with the effects the writing achieves in the quotations selected. There were some insecurities in knowledge of technical terms, such as referring to stanzas as paragraphs and to defining any use of the letter 's' as sibilance. Very stretched and unsupported claims were sometimes made for the effects of punctuation and time was wasted counting the number of lines in the poem to little effect. In the prose there was some lack of close reading of the 'rose' image and of the allusion to *Romeo and Juliet*.

The general impression, nevertheless, was of well-prepared conscientious and lively candidates, many with a considerable sophistication in their reading of literature. There were very few brief answers or infringements of the rubric.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Question 1 (Poetry)** [*Alone* by Tomas Tranströmer, translation by Robin Fulton]

Candidates clearly engaged with the subject matter of the poem and successful responses were varied and interesting. There were comments on the attention-grabbing nature of the opening line with its allusion to a near-death experience. Strong answers paid close attention to 'vividly convey' and noted the alliterative effects in 'skidded sideways on the ice' and the isolation created by 'out/on the wrong side of the road'. Candidates were generally strong at noting the effects of the enjambment in the poem; weaker answers spotted it, but gave no comment on the effects. The vivid imagery of the surrounding cars closing in with their huge lights like enemies was explored in some detail. There was much consideration of 'broke free' and the poet's life moving 'further and further away'. Most interpreted this as the materialistic ideas that define our value as a human being, as well as our identity, being lost to the anonymity of death. They linked this moment to the title *Alone* showing the extreme isolation the poet feels at this point. Strong candidates related this moment to the 'breaking free' of the car in the penultimate stanza where the effect is more positive and redeeming. Less successful responses misinterpreted the lines as the poet's daughters dying in the car crash.

The simile 'like a boy in a playground surrounded by enemies' clearly struck a chord with candidates and there were many detailed responses to the fear and threat conveyed. There were impressive responses to the more difficult image 'in a transparent terror that floated like egg white'. Some saw this as suggesting the poet's pale faced terror - exposed, fragile and vulnerable like the egg white unprotected by its shell. Other candidates interpreted the image as the poet being trapped in limbo, or that everything was a blur; 'his angst had become so profound that his emotions have become hard to grasp like an egg white', that his terror was raw or that the oncoming lights produced a ghostly ectoplasm effect. Most read the final two lines of the third stanza closely, observing that: 'The seconds grew' suggests his perception of time was distorted, emphasised by the dashes, and that the hospital simile fulfilled a dual role of conveying size and foreshadowing his injuries/healing process or isolation from everyday life to come.

The difference in pace and structure of the fourth stanza, and the effects of this in conveying the 'time standing still' moment of acceptance before death, were commendably noted by many candidates. Both the physical and mental connotations of the word 'crushed' and its positioning at the end of the stanza featured in many strong answers.

Analysis of the final section of the poem proved to be a key discriminator. The best responses saw the hope in the 'helping' grain of sand and the 'wonderful' gust of wind and mused upon the fragility of life in light of this miraculous escape, caused by nature and not by man. The personification of the car scuttling smartly as of its own volition contributed to this vivid effect. Many candidates effectively looked beyond the literal here, as their views were closely rooted in the language of the poem. The post flew away into the darkness of death and isolation, whereas the poet remained in the white whirling snow, still alive. A feeling of peace and calm was conveyed by the dash after 'Then', the word 'stillness' and the security of the seatbelt, all indicating the poet's survival. The final line was seen perceptively by many as suggesting that the poet will no longer be the same man after the trauma of this experience.

### **Question 2 (Prose)** [from *The Dogs and The Wolves* by Irène Némirovsky]

In general, candidates were to be commended on the general sophistication of their approach to the task.

Strong candidates distinguished themselves by an ability to focus on the contrast in emotions between Harry and Laurence, to select relevant material, and to read closely. There were several perceptive and convincing answers which demonstrated a full engagement with the text and task.

There was fairly widespread and well evidenced understanding of the way Laurence's ordered 'black and white' world and sense of guilt are portrayed in the first two paragraphs. Strong candidates paid equal attention to Harry, contrasting Laurence's 'she loved him' with his 'He loved her so much...He would have happily died for her'. They commented perceptively on Harry's response to Laurence's father's approval as a victory, a triumph, whereas, for her, it was poisoned by pity and remorse. As one insightful answer observed, 'When something finally penetrates her to her very core it is her father not Harry.' Another commented: 'The 'strange feeling of resentment' epitomises her split persona. She is supposed to enjoy it (the kiss) because she is allowed to but dislikes it because of what it took to achieve it.' It was also noted that the kiss in the car took place in symbolic darkness.

Many candidates showed awareness of the internal conflict in Laurence and saw that Harry's emotions were also complex. Some, however, found it difficult to distinguish between Harry's emotions before and after Laurence's father's approval and after it, seeing him as equally conflicted about their love as Laurence, whereas he is resentful of her father's attitude towards their love.

The response to the *Romeo and Juliet* allusion discriminated between those who read closely and saw that Laurence was a 'more rational Juliet', suspicious of the excessive drama of romantic love and those who only saw the allusion as romantic. It was often regarded as foreshadowing tragedy - a valid interpretation but sometimes at the expense of a careful reading.

There was widespread response to the rose image. The strongest saw that the rain represented Harry's passion and the tightly furled petals Laurence's reserve. Less successful answers commented on the rose only as a symbol of love and beauty. One perceptive answer linked the rose image to the moment where Laurence pulls away when Harry puts his hand inside her glove: 'He is the unwelcome rain entering the hardy rose.' The imagery of fire representing the power and possibly the destructiveness of Harry's passion was also observed.

Attention to the ending of the passage, as above, also distinguished good answers. One candidate commented that the defeat of her father is also the defeat of Laurence as 'she is like her father.'

Many sound answers would have been improved by relating the bullets more closely to the stem question, spending equal time on the three bullets or concentrating more fully on how the language of the passage conveyed the contrasting feelings. In some scripts there were bland and unsupported comments on sentence length, when time should have been spent on focusing, say, on the key patterns of imagery in the passage.

# WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/03

Set Text

## Key messages

The following are important features of good answers on this component:

*Relevance to the question.* An essay showing a detailed understanding of the text cannot score highly unless it answers directly the question.

*Exploring the extract in detail.* In extract questions, candidates are expected to explore the printed extract in detail as part of their response to the question. Glancing references to a few details in the extract will not lead to high reward.

*Sustaining a critical analysis.* The strongest responses show a detailed critical engagement with the writer's technique. This is true of both the extract questions and the general questions. Careful and sensitive evaluation of the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to achieve particular effects is required to gain reward in the top two bands.

## General comments

The majority of scripts revealed candidates' enjoyment of the texts they had studied. Most candidates knew their drama or prose fiction texts in at least some detail; only a small minority struggled to communicate basic personal responses to characters, themes and settings. There were a significant number of very good essays in which candidates sustained a complete engagement with both text and task. Integrating concise, apt reference with perceptive critical comment, these essays were a pleasure to read.

The strongest essays were those which engaged with the key terms of the question from the start. By contrast, the least successful introductions tended to unload extraneous contextual information, sometimes at very great length, thereby reducing the amount of time available for answering the actual question.

Some candidates started their responses with the best of intentions but lost focus part of the way through the essay – as they perhaps veered towards a topic they had covered before. This was most evident in answers to the Mishima questions. It is essential that candidates keep in their sights the specific demands of the actual question on the paper. IGCSE questions will not invite, or reward highly, character sketches or a mere cataloguing of themes.

The best responses to extract questions engaged sensitively and in detail with the extract. There were, however, three types of response that tended to constrain performance in these questions. Some candidates attempted to be exhaustive, paying attention to every detail in the passage, which is impossible within the 45-minute period that should be allocated to a question. In so doing, responses became superficial because they were descriptive rather than analytical. Other candidates analysed well only a small part of the printed extract in some detail but missed more central concerns. This was most evident in those responses to the Mishima extract where the significance of Yasuo's luminous watch was sometimes explored in meticulous detail but the attack on Hatsue was ignored or dealt with very fleetingly. Yet other candidates were able very competently to place the extract in general terms within the wider context of the text but made only glancing references to the detail of the extract. The most successful responses to extract questions selected material carefully from the extract in sufficient, rather than excessive, detail.

All IGCSE Literature questions will make reference to the writer. This is deliberate, as questions will be worded in such a way as to invite an evaluation of the writer's technique in relation to the meanings conveyed. Some candidates wrote in the mistaken belief that cataloguing language features was the same as meaningful analysis. Sometimes comment stopped at the level of generalisation ('This makes the scene dramatic') and vague assertion ('Here Ibsen uses strong words'). A minority of candidates, relentless in their

commentary on the use of ellipses and exclamation marks in drama texts, would have been better if they had explored the precise effects created by the writer's choice of particular words or phrases. Comments on the effectiveness of punctuation were in the main unhelpfully vague: e.g. 'the use of ellipses makes everything mysterious' and 'the use of a range of punctuation makes the play flow'.

### Individual questions

#### *Antigone*

##### Question 1

Most answers revealed at least a sound understanding of the content: Antigone is to die; Haemon surprisingly chooses Antigone over Ismene; Creon is a pragmatic, workmanlike king. The best responses paid attention to the key word 'striking' in the question: 'In what ways does Anouilh make this a *striking* opening to the play?' These responses paid attention to the extract as the opening of a play, and more particularly the opening of a tragedy, and commented appropriately on how an audience might respond to what is happening on stage. In order to answer the question effectively, there really had to be some reference to the ways in which the extract prepares us for later events in the play as well as a detailed exploration of the extract.

##### Question 7

Very few candidates attempted this question. In the responses seen there was a tendency for candidates to list the character traits of Antigone, rather than fully engage with the question that demanded much more than a character sketch: 'To what extent does Anouilh encourage *you* to sympathise with Antigone?'

#### *Games at Twilight and Other Stories*

##### Question 2

The best responses paid attention to the detail of the language which showed Harish's obsession with surface textures. He is 'captivated' by the melon and regards the prospect of his sons eating the melon as he would 'cannibals at a feast'. A number of responses focused solely on Harish's obsession with the melon and neglected the second half of the extract, which deals with his obsession with the feel of books. Better answers considered the effect of Harish's obsession on his long-suffering wife and on others outside the family who have to go without basic necessities as a result of his obsession.

##### Question 8

There were relatively few answers to this question. The story *Studies in the Park* has a distinctive beginning with its rich catalogue of sounds that disturb Suno's studies, and candidates were able to make reference to some of them. They were generally less confident about the details surrounding Suno after he reaches the park.

#### *'Master Harold'...and the Boys*

##### Question 3

Successful responses showed a mature understanding of Hally's feelings towards his parents as revealed in the extract but also rooted in their reading of the rest of the play. Most responses examined the dramatic impact of the phone conversation in which the audience hears only Hally speak, and these responses were attentive to the significant and revealing changes in tone during the extract. Many acknowledged the significance of the moment as the one in which the full extent of the father's condition is revealed for the first time.

##### Question 9

The strongest responses regarded Sam and Willie as friends to Hally in his childhood, and pointed out their shared happiness in reminiscing about Hally's visits to their room in the boarding house. The particular role of Sam as substitute father was addressed, and also the significance of the kite and the 'whites only' bench. Better responses adopted a balanced approach, noting the way Hally orders the men about without respecting their age, and commenting on Hally's own racism, and its shockingly dramatic impact towards the

end of the play. Weaker responses moved away from the detail of the text itself and unloaded paragraphs of background information on the subject of apartheid.

### ***An Enemy of the People***

#### **Question 4**

This extract follows the explosive confrontation between the Stockmann brothers, with the Mayor denouncing his brother as 'an enemy to our community'. This pivotal moment caused some candidates to digress at the expense of exploring the printed extract in detail. The best responses both contextualised the extract and explored its detail, paying attention to the responses of father, wife and daughter to the unfolding events of the play. These responses focused on the key words 'dramatic' and 'revealing', for example, in their attention to the final lines spoken by Mrs Stockmann and Petra, and mother's and daughter's very different reactions to the family's current predicament.

#### **Question 10**

The question focused on the extent to which candidates agreed with the prompt: 'Ibsen makes Hovstad a totally unpleasant character'. Most responses commented on the character's sudden and brazen shift of allegiance from one brother to the next, and there was much interesting analysis of his ultimately pragmatic approach to the problem of the town baths - once the cost to the taxpayers had been made clear. However, only the strongest responses explored the ways in which Ibsen uses dialogue and actions to present aspects of Hovstad's character on stage.

### ***Fiela's Child***

#### **Question 5**

Most responses showed an understanding of the key aspects of the extract: Van Rooyen's thoughts about the struggle to make a living and the extra money to be had from the illicit hunting of elephants; Lukas's disappearance, and the reaction of mother and eldest son. The strongest answers engaged closely both with the words Matthee uses and with the ways in which the opening extract prepares the reader for the rest of the novel.

#### **Question 11**

Relatively few responses were seen to this question. Most were able to run through the character's main traits and the events surrounding Nina during her time in the Forest. Her savage beating at the hands of Van Rooyen was explored with some sensitivity, notably the incident where he cuts off her hair with a knife. Not much mention was made, however, of her genuine affinity with nature and birds in particular that made sense of the intrepid and illicit expeditions into the forest that got her into so much trouble.

### ***The Sound of Waves***

#### **Question 6**

Most candidates showed an understanding of Yasuo's arrogance and thoroughly unpleasant nature, and were alert both to the serious parts of the extract (his intention of forcing himself on Hatsue) and to the humorous aspects (his watch catching the attention of the hornet which stings him). The best responses analysed precisely the effects created by particular words in making this such a memorable moment in the novel. The least successful responses digressed at excessive length about the luminous watch as a wicked symbol of urban life, but often without either precise reference to the text or consideration of other major concerns of the extract, not least of which are Yasuo's dishonourable intentions towards Hatsue.

#### **Question 12**

The best responses focused explicitly on the key words 'Mishima's portrayal of Shinji's relationship with the sea'. These essays showed a commanding grasp of the relevant detail: his skill as a seaman; his respect for the sea god; his gifts from the sea offered to the lighthouse family; his dream of a sea-going career. The strongest answers discussed the significance of all of the above in relation to the question and explored the qualities of the writing in detail, in particular, the vivid account at the climax of the novel of Shinji fixing the lifeline to the buoy in the typhoon. Weaker responses tended merely to list the ways in which Shinji's life was connected with the sea.