

### Key messages

Option (A) discursive essays should analyse specific details of the text within the argument presented.  
Option (B) passage questions may usefully place the passage in the wider text as a relevant context.

### General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with the large majority of candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. Very few responses showed evidence of mismanagement of time in this session. However, too many students wrote very short, basic answers. The quality of expression was sound in most cases, but there are too many candidates that displayed expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to all the texts on the paper, but the novel, *All The Bright Places* was the least favourite choice. Answers reflecting a wide range of performance were seen on each of the texts attempted by the candidates.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

Assessment Objective L2 from the Literature in English syllabus states that candidates should 'analyse ways in which writers' choices of language, form and structure shape meanings and effects'. Candidates attempting option (B) passage questions often showed evidence of meeting this Assessment Objective in their responses to the given passage. However, candidates attempting option (A) questions, the discursive essay, also need to provide evidence that they are able to do this, by **quoting or referring closely to specific moments** in the text. Also, irrespective of choosing option (A) or (B) candidates should then discuss all references in detail, focusing on the writer's choices and exploring what for the candidate are the effects of those choices.

Candidates responding to option (B) passage questions, who briefly place the passage within the wider work it is selected from, often write more focused and relevant answers. Some candidates could benefit from considering this approach, as it will give a context to their interpretation of the passage itself, as well as providing evidence of knowledge of the text. This equally applies to passages from poetry selections as well as the drama texts.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Section A: POETRY

#### Question 1: Poems

- (a) All the centres opted for poetry as one of the selected genres. Please note that poetry is optional on this level.

Some very weak responses discussed poems not in the selection, for which no credit could be given, or poems from the selection which did not apparently present love - Dharker *Blessing and These are the Times We Live in*, and Hendriks - *The Migrant*. The success of the essays based on these choices was very limited. Weak answers chose at least one relevant poem and were often able to show some knowledge of the basic meaning of the poems. At this level there was often very little or no attempt to offer a comparison of the writing. Some implicit sense of the poetic methods or that the poems were constructed improved the responses, though in many weak essays there was very little evidence of any appreciation of the genre or that the works were poems. More competent responses made wiser choices of material to discuss with Blake's *The Clod and the Pebble*, Millay's *Sonnet 29*, Thomas' *The Forsaken Wife* and Shakespeare's *Sonnet 19* the most popular choices. Answers at this level showed understanding of the theme and were able to offer a comparison of the chosen poems, often treating each poem separately with a summative, comparative conclusion. Better answers at this level explored some of the poetic methods, often the language and the imagery, with often some relevant context added in support of the interpretation. Good answers focused on the writing of their chosen poems, exploring how the different choices of form, rhythm and rhyme, as well as language and imagery, enable the poets to create different tones and emotions in the readers. Very good responses developed such points into sophisticated interpretations of the poets' presentations of love, with apt quotations and a use of appropriate contexts.

- (b) Nearly all answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and understanding. Very weak answers, however, were often puzzled by the overarching metaphor and appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem since almost no quotations were used, with consequent weaknesses in understanding and the discussion. Answers in the lower levels often attempted a paraphrase of the poem, with some able to recognise the poem's 'way in which the three stanzas have been written', as one described it. Answers which were able

to shape the paraphrase partly to the topic of the question, 'death', did better at this level. More competent answers showed knowledge and understanding of Scotts' soothing tone, often referred to as "lulling the soldier to sleep", and to some extent possible interpretations of the poem. At this level these tended to be asserted with occasional supporting quotations, and candidates who were able to show some awareness of Scotts' poetic choices tended to do better. Good answers developed this further, often starting from a consideration of Scotts' poetic methods, for example, the structure and verse form of the poem, using this to lead naturally into considering the question in more detail. Many good responses offered multiple interpretations of the poem's meaning and where such arguments were supported by detailed analysis of the language and imagery, the answers were very good. These essays rose to the challenge of exploring the language, the symbols and the imagery, often developing convincing interpretations on the strength of the analysis. More assured and perceptive analyses considered the effects of the language and imagery in sophisticated detail, for instance, the 'auditory imagery juxtaposing life and death', as one suggested. Other sophisticated answers saw the tone as commanding, even using imperative language to enforce the tone, with the main metaphor Scotts focuses on "suggesting euphemism with the choice of 'sleep', and 'slumber', highlighted by the soft sibilance, and the anaphoric use of the imperative 'Sleep!', aided by an exclamation mark to coax the soldier to die a peaceful death", as one answer put it. Such arguments were at times supported by appropriate biographical context and did very well.

## SECTION B: PROSE

### Question 2: Short Stories

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Most responses were able to give a broad context to the passage and show some knowledge of the story in general. Weaker answers tended to retell the story up to this point or offer a summary of the events of the given passage and what had preceded it. More competent answers focused on the reference to time and the sense of urgency it created. Better answers at this level noted that the boy's action revealed something about his disquiet in his wrong-doing. More competent answers looked at MacLavery's use of diction to create secrecy as well as sentence structure to heighten the intended tension. Good responses looked closely at language and punctuation, noting how MacLavery creates anticipation and tension through the narrative voice. Very good answers explored the effects of such choices, especially how she includes the letter as structural device. Others analysed the effects of the variety in the sentence structures and the way onomatopoeia "heightens the senses of the readers" as one put it. Where such interpretations were supported by specific detail from the passage the answers did very well.

Most responses were able to give a broad context to the passage. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of the boy's actions and the consequent loss of trust, while others gave a summary of the events of the given passage. Many responses relied heavily on weak statements such as "causing readers to become more curious and making them want to read on." Good answers looked closely at the details: MacLavery's use of the narrative voice to shape the building of tension, for instance.

Where such ideas were supported by specific reference to the details of the passage, the answers did very well.

### Question 3: J.M. COETZEE: *Life & Times of Michael K*

- (a) Nearly every response was able to select some relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker answers often explained the background to Michael K and retold his story, often in quite accurate detail, though with only sporadic reference to the given task. At this level, awareness of the importance of the two narrative styles improved the response, with some able to see the way each narrative highlights a specific theme. More competent answers explored the idea of how the third-person narrator focuses on Michael K's surroundings, focusing on his longing for freedom, contrasting it to the Medical Officer's first person account of Michael K, clearly showing his misinterpretation of the concept of oppression and freedom. Very few candidates managed to write a successful response, often making vague statements such as "The doctor became obsessed with the man that does not want to live in society.", not developing the statement of supporting it with specific reference of detail from the novel.
- (b) Most responses were able to give at least a broad context to the passage. Weaker answers tended to retell the events that had led to this moment in the text and showed some knowledge of character and plot. Weak answers lost focus of the question and made no reference to K's surroundings, but rather paraphrased the passage. Better answers at this level did focus on some of the detail and were able to explain the presentation of K's surroundings. More competent answers looked at the presentation in detail, showing understanding of Coetzee's use of imagery and sensory devices. These were often informed by some awareness of appropriate contexts – such as the symbolism of the stripped car or the imagery created by the green grass and driftsand. Such ideas were developed further in good essays, where the details of Coetzee's style – language and

descriptive detail for example were often well discussed. Other good answers looked at his use of telling details, such as the ‘the slap of waves’ and ‘hiss of retreating water’, and how these are used to underpin the sense of ever-present uneasiness, here and in the wider novel. Where such analysis was developed to consider the effects of these choices and how they might differ from reader to reader, the answers often did very well.

**Question 4: JENNIFER NIVEN: *All the Bright Places***

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**SECTION C: DRAMA**

**Question 5: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *As you like it***

There were very few responses to this question. Those who did attempt this question, were able to select relevant material with which to address the task, although often not successful. Answers were mostly basic, ranging from half a page to one page. Most candidates gave a brief summary of the play, with almost no reference to the meaning of the title, the contrast in setting, the role of gender or the way in which Shakespeare challenges the perceptions which were held at the time when the play was written.

There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate. However, it must be noted that if candidates only paraphrase the extract without any reference to specific dramatic effects such as the use of an extended metaphor, the unexpected inclusion of the monologue, the melancholic and cynical tone no credit can be awarded.

**Question 6: PERCY MTWA, MBONGENI NGEMA and BARNEY SIMON: *Woza Albert!***

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) In response to the question many candidates were able to place the passage into the context of the wider text, with nearly all answers showing at least some knowledge and understanding of the significance of the passage. There were however some very weak answers which struggled with some of the basic knowledge and tended to either summarise the extract, often with little direct reference to the passage, or to paraphrase the passage in detail. Better answers at this level showed understanding of the stage directions, “lights dim” which creates an immediate shift to despair juxtaposed against the “joyous siren”. Sounder answers considered the imagery of the train and church as presentations of hope and despair, as well as the use of punctuation to show the shift from hope to despair. Good answers also analysed some of the details, the dramatic effects of the setting and props such as the sleeping woman on the boxes, and the stage directions to show some understanding of dramatic methods. Others looked closely at the effect of the macaronic text especially in the song, and the use of future tense and first-person plural “we” to show how unity and hope change into despair. Those who could blend their contextual points with a grasp of the dramatic methods in the shift between hope and despair often did very well.

**Positive suggestions to teachers**

- Teachers should discourage students to use superfluous expressions such as “brilliantly explores”, “massively apparent”, “masterfully present” or “Coetzee does a wonderful job...” These expressions are arbitrary and does not constitute a personal response.
- Whenever a reference is made to literary techniques such as rhyme and rhythm, it is imperative that the student gives a reason why it is important.
- Teachers instruct students to start their answers with a quote. It is better to teach students to start their writing with a solid thesis statement, which they then continue to prove by using strong points, evidence and analysis. A general quote such as “Where there is love there is life”, is not a thesis statement on the theme of love as presented by two poets and serves no purpose.
- It is important to note that one should not quote chunks, neither should quotes be “tagged on”. It is important to develop any reference made to the text.
- It is not necessary at this level to explain literary devices. Rather discuss the effect created by the specific image than wasting time to give a definition of it.