



A-Level

English Language and Literature

7707/2 Exploring Conflict

Report on the Examination

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Summary

Overall performance compared to last year

With Section A Recreative writing, students again showed their enjoyment of writing these through engaging with the tasks set. Performance was better in Section A Recreative writing than in previous years with many more students demonstrating flair and originality in their accounts, allowing them to access Levels 4 and 5. These skills were shown through the creation of an effective new narrative moment, often driven by the character and the task rather than by the base text, which was used more to support the characterisation offered rather than dominate it though a more literal retelling of events. The tasks for all popular texts introduced interesting perspectives which allowed the students to be creative. For example, in *Into the Wild*, Chris Fish is a member of the McCandless family but who didn't have a personal, close relationship with Chris. In *The Kite Runner*, the perspective is of an outsider, not only to Amir's family but also to Afghanistan as Tanya, Assef's mother, is German. In *The Great Gatsby*, the anonymous maid could be given any stance towards both her employer and her employment. All the tasks focused on minor included participants, offering students scope to use their imaginations.

Performance was similar to last year's in the Critical commentary responses as there was still the same tendency to overlook AO4, sometimes producing an imbalance in achievement with their AO2 mark. For AO2 and AO4, there was some focus on language choices, but there seemed to be less precise focus than in previous years, with many students commenting quite broadly on imagery, metaphor, symbols, motifs but not much else.

For Section B Dramatic encounters, there also appeared to be less successful language analysis than in previous years and level 2 was awarded more than in recent years because students just didn't offer language labels to credit or offered so few that the level 2 descriptor 'incomplete development' fitted the response for AO1. A greater range of contextual factors was seen both for contexts of production and contexts of reception. However, much of the discussion for contexts of production was generalised, often unconvincing and sometimes untrue in the observations about social and historical contexts of the play. At its best, more accurate and perceptive understanding of contextual factors added to the students' interpretations of the question, producing more nuanced responses. Some responses also seemed skewed to making AO3 seem the more dominant Assessment Objective, resulting in a strong mark for this but lower AO1/AO2 marks. It should be noted that despite assessing the same Assessment Objectives as Imagined worlds on Paper 1, these are awarded with different weightings.

The overall popularity of the sets texts has not altered. For Section A, responses to *The Great Gatsby* account for approximately 67% of the total, followed in popularity by *The Kite Runner* (23%) and *Into the Wild* (10%). In Section B, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is overwhelmingly popular with 81% of all responses, followed by *Othello* (13%), *All My Sons* (5%) and *The Herd* (1%). In terms of optionality for Section B Dramatic encounters, there was a fairly equal selection of Q13/Q14 for *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Q11/Q12 for *All My Sons*. In contrast for *Othello*, the overwhelming majority chose Q9 and Q16 for *The Herd*.

Areas where students excelled

- Creating lively and engaging accounts for the recreative writing tasks with believable and convincing characterisations and settings, which showed clear understanding that new perspectives on the events depicted was required
- Showcasing a range of narrative devices (speech and thought, setting description, characterisation etc) in writing that was sustained and controlled from beginning to end, demonstrating confidence in both the choice and the use of different genres, while incorporating imaginative details carefully and judiciously (ie not over-using metaphors etc.)
- Thinking carefully about the account receiver, considering the relationship between the two characters: strangers, casual acquaintances, close friends etc and shaped their responses accordingly
- Using the monologue form with success – in previous years this has not been handled well and it was notable how confidently it was being used this year as students better sustained the sense of an account receiver and maintained the register for the voice of their account giver
- Selecting key details from the base text extracts to use as springboards for presenting the account-giver's character and point of view: the maid who 'spat meditatively' in *The Great Gatsby*, Tanya as a 'nervous woman' in *The Kite Runner* and the 'red eyes' of Chris Fish in *Into the Wild*; students also used cues taken from the wider texts thoughtfully i.e. the concept of culture shock in Hosseini's presentation Amir and Baba's experiences as immigrants in America as also relevant to the students' depiction of German-born Tanya living in 1970s Afghanistan and Fitzgerald's depiction of wealth in 1920s America useful to present the counter narrative of poverty and disadvantage in the representation of Gatsby's maid
- In commentaries, writing thoughtfully, evaluatively and with a sense of a bigger picture about their own creative choices and how these reflected or contrasted with the base text
- Engaging with the question focus for Section B and offering a range of different and subtle interpretations supported by secure and precise analysis of language from a number of careful selections from the wider play
- Using contextual factors to evaluate the playwright's choices in creating the dramatic conflict, whether this be in their use of stagecraft elements or language.
- Critical responses to the plays were used well, and there was some thoughtful consideration of relevant contextual factors for the specific question.

Areas where students struggled

- Choosing an appropriate register, resulting in the use of more taboo language than in previous series that did not add to their writing or the creation of character
- Keeping control of the narrative until the end; many started well with shaped and engaging openings, but this was not sustained until the end and accounts sometimes ended very abruptly
- Selecting details to use from the base text and so used too much
- Choosing an appropriate genre for their recast, thinking about who the account giver/account receivers are and assessing the suitability of different genres

- Exemplifying stylistic choices made by the base text writer in the critical commentary, often focusing on broad thematic and contextual features instead which do not meet the mark scheme requirements for 'language'
- Making connections to the base text in a more than superficial, and often unsupported, manner e.g. Fitzgerald uses long sentences, so I did too
- Discussing social and historical contextual factors without generalising about women's powerlessness in the past in both the public and private sphere
- In Section B, Dramatic encounters, some found writing analytically about the text and the question focus challenging, often most evident with discussion of the students' own choice of extracts. Here there was a tendency to describe the link between these choices and the question and not to select quotations for linguistic deconstruction and exploration.
- Students overlooked the nature of a play as a drama and frequently did not discuss any genre conventions/stagecraft elements – often referring to the text as a novel
- Labelling language features from the play studied or using only a very narrow range, mainly sentence functions/moods such as interrogatives and exclamatories, or word classes such as noun and the overuse of the term 'modifiers' as a catch-all term for language features. There was a lot less focus on speech acts and more developed features, eg. noun phrases etc.
- Planning time effectively for Section B, Dramatic encounters and this sometimes led to less of a focus on the selections from the wider play with often only brief references for AO2.
- Selecting relevantly from learned context and often discussing contexts of production that wasn't really relevant to the question or was sometimes either inaccurate or generalised as to not be very convincing.

Assessment objectives

AO	Common student errors
AO1 Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression	Mislabelling features such as word classes Using imprecise terms, including imagery and low frequency lexis Using quotations without linguistic labels, or using linguistic labels without supporting examples Focusing on a narrow range of language features (mainly sentence moods and word classes) and/or using broader labels for these (e.g. simple word class labels such as nouns) Using a narrow range of language levels and/or not exploring larger units of language (such as noun phrases) Referring to a face-threatening act without either exploring what linguistically in the quotation made it an FTA, or whether it threatened other characters' positive or negative face Showing confusion or a lack of detail about maxims, with frequent mix-ups over manner and quality/quantity (for example, with students labelling Blanche's monologue or improvised lies as flouting manner and, if considering scene 1, labelling Blanche's change of topic as flouting manner rather than considering relevance)
AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts	<u>Section A, Recreative writing</u> Commenting insufficiently on narratorial decisions in critical commentaries Not offering precise language focus in commentaries to analyse the meanings and effects intended <u>Section B, Dramatic encounters</u> Being less analytical and more descriptive with their own choices of extracts

	Changing the focus of the question to what they want to talk about e.g. race in <i>Othello</i> , Keller's guilt in <i>All My Sons</i> and Blanche's façade in <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
A03 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which texts are produced and received	Overlooking the dramatic genre and not identifying any stagecraft conventions of plays Discussing historical context with wild inaccuracy e.g. the dates of the American Civil War, Stanley's status as a Polish immigrant
A04 Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic and literary concepts and method	Referring to the base text generally without being informed by linguistic terminology Not referring to the base text sufficiently to get higher reward Comparing narration choices such as first and third person without development and detail over the effects of these choices in the context of the account and base text
A05 Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways	<u>Section A, Recreative writing (creativity)</u> Not reading the information carefully on the intended account-receiver Creating an account without any sense of an account-receiver Taking a literal approach to the base text extract and retelling it without adding anything new Showing a lack of knowledge of the base text or making errors e.g. presenting Tanya as an Afghan woman in <i>The Kite Runner</i> Adopting an inappropriate or unconvincing register e.g. using the word 'mate' for a friend in <i>The Great Gatsby</i> <u>Section A, Critical commentary (expertise)</u> Not organising ideas structurally into paragraphs Errors in accuracy (spelling, punctuation and grammar)

Section A: Writing about society

Question 1

Read the section of Chapter 13, from 'Carine made peace with her parents shortly after Chris disappeared, and now, at the age of twenty-two, she calls their relationship "extremely good".' to 'Carine carried her brother's ashes in her knapsack.'

This describes Carine's life with her husband Chris Fish and her reaction to the news of her brother Chris's death.

Recast the base text into an account that Chris Fish, Carine's husband, gives to a customer at the auto repair business they own.

In your transformation you should consider:

- Chris Fish's feelings about his brother-in-law Chris's life and death and its impact on his wife Carine
- Chris Fish's view of his own life and ambitions for the future.

What students did well

- Addressed the whole task, focusing on all the bullet points more completely than students approaching the other recreative tasks.
- Referred to ideas from the base text extending beyond the given passage to show knowledge of Chris, his relationship with his sister and parents, and Chris' attitudes towards wealth etc.
- Taking cues from the given passage: reddened eyes, his desire to be successful with his business, Carine's account of her response to hearing about Chris' death.
- Presenting a heartfelt approach, showcasing Fish/Carine's devastation, and presenting the encounter very much as Fish trying to maintain a sense of normality while internally, he was struggling to contain his grief. This worked well where students had thought about the balance of speech/thought, with the speech aspects dealing with transactional customer/business aspects of the account and thought/narrative detail addressing his inner emotions.
- Incorporating some nice imaginative choices to reflect Chris' inner emotions: colour imagery (to reflect Fish's red eyes), personification of business-type paraphernalia eg. the cash register.
- Some students chose to present Fish as angry and frustrated. This worked really well, with some really engaging pieces. It was wholly convincing to present barely contained anger under the surface of civility with customers to showcase Fish's concern and anxiety for the welfare of his wife, frustrated at Chris for his selfishness at going into the wild, for not contacting his family, for not thinking about his sister and considering Chris Fish's lack of personal relationship with Chris etc.

Common misunderstandings

- Some students stayed very close to the given passage and thus barely touched on Chris or Carine's relationship with him, rarely extending beyond her crying upon hearing of Chris' death.
- Relying almost solely on dialogue as a narrative technique for the account. In this instance, recounting very personal emotions to a customer, no matter how regular a customer, was unconvincing.
- Finishing accounts very abruptly, often with the customer simply leaving, so no sense of a complete narrative.

Question 3

Read the section of Chapter 11, from 'The magistrates sat on their platform, alongside Detective Whicher and Williamson, Captain Meredith, Superintendent Wolfe and Henry Clark, the magistrates' clerk.' to 'I have been putting questions according to the rule of evidence,' said Clark, 'and if I do not get an answer, I must put the question again.'

This describes the magistrates' examination of Constance Kent to decide if she should be sent for trial.

Recast the base text into an account that Henry Clark gives to a magistrate discussing the day's events in court.

In your transformation you should consider:

- Henry Clark's views about the case and the ongoing events both in and outside the courtroom
- his impressions of the lawyers, the witnesses and Constance Kent.

What students did well

- As only a very small minority of students (fewer than 1% of all entries) chose this text and task, senior examiners therefore saw insufficient responses to comment on performance.

Common misunderstandings

- Please see above.

Question 5

Read the section of Chapter 5, from 'After half an hour, the sun shone again, and the grocer's automobile rounded Gatsby's drive with the raw material for his servants' dinner – I felt sure he wouldn't eat a spoonful.' to 'Daisy took the brush with delight, and smoothed her hair, whereupon Gatsby sat down and shaded his eyes and began to laugh.'

This describes Nick Carraway's visit to Gatsby's house with Daisy Buchanan.

Recast the base text into an account that Gatsby's maid gives to a local market trader about Daisy's visit to Gatsby's house.

In your transformation you should consider:

- the maid's impressions of Daisy and Gatsby's relationship
- the relationship between the servants at Gatsby's house and their attitudes to the richer residents of East and West Egg.

What students did well

- Thinking very carefully about where this encounter would take place. The best responses were located within a market setting or away from the house, allowing for some really evocative constructions of place, addressing the bustle, busyness, sounds etc. Others located this encounter within the kitchen which also worked well and almost gave a sense of urgency to a quick bit of gossip between both the participants' other jobs.
- Using the interactional situation between the maid and the market trader to shape the presentation of the narrative moment, sometimes treating the ordering of fruit and vegetables for Gatsby's house and parties as the initial reason for the interaction, sometimes the fruit became a motif throughout the account or was used as structural ways to open and close the narrative moment.
- Taking cues from the given passage: much focus on Daisy's buttons, on the maid spitting, on opening the windows, on the rain (allowing for some pathetic fallacy to be introduced), Gatsby nearly breaking the clock/tripping on the stairs. Using these textual cues to explore ideas about social class: eg. Daisy's buttons led to some thoughtful reflection by the maid about her own drab uniform in comparison to Daisy's clothes; the spitting to reflect the maid's disdain for the wealthy and the fragility of Gatsby/Daisy's relationship reflected in the breaking of the clock.
- Picking cues from the wider novel: Valley of Ashes to reflect the maid's own circumstances, ideas about East/West Egg, the decadence/profligacy of the wealthy juxtaposed with the toil of the maid, Tom's own affairs. (Interestingly there were some quite puritanical views presented with lots of judgements about extra-marital affairs.)
- Thinking about key contextual factors e.g. the Great Depression so the maid/market trader were very anti the wealthy and depicted the characters' hatred/envy of the rich. Some used this to shape their own narrative moments with the maid taking matters into her own hands and exploiting her role to steal from Gatsby and use the market trader as a receiver for these goods.

- Controlling the narrative with an effective ending, sometimes signalled by the end of the encounter with the maid having made her purchases, some by reflecting on Gatsby and Daisy's relationship, some finishing with a particular motif, some linking back to the beginning to demonstrate a cyclical structure.
- Showing an awareness of how the maid would refer to Gatsby, Daisy, Tom Buchanan and Nick Carraway with an understanding of her status compared to theirs.
- Reflecting on the temporal context of the encounter with most locating it soon after the event as a recent update for the market trader on events at Gatsby's house.
- Constructing two convincing characters for both the maid and the market trader. Some created a casual friendship between the two, others imagined more intimate and romantic relationships and used these to shape the content and attitudes expressed towards Gatsby and Daisy.
- Making careful choices about what the maid would say to a market trader in dialogue but also what her private thoughts would be.
- Creating lively and effective voices for the characters and using language convincingly to convey the sense of their idiolects/sociolects such as colloquial choices which were well selected and convincingly indicated social class, sometimes using speech laced with bitterness/envy etc.
- Thinking carefully about their language and narratorial choices: balancing speech/thought (the interaction/speech with the market trader not always revealing all the maid's inner thoughts which worked effectively), using descriptive techniques to present the maid's envy, disapproval, interest and concern for Gatsby.
- Forming a vivid sense of setting for the account (if outside of Gatsby's home).

Common misunderstandings

- Students sometimes using the extract too literally, using micro details from the text that a maid's account would not realistically focused on and added few new perspectives on the events and characters.
- Treating this task still as a pastiche of Fitzgerald's style: creating flowery scene descriptions, overusing familiar motifs and adopting a register more suited to Nick Carraway than a maid. These all made for less successful recasts, especially if a first-person narrative has been used as it made for ineffective characterisation of the maid and her voice.
- Overlooking the account receiver completely or with only a passing reference, mainly at the end to the ordering/purchasing of some goods.
- Choosing a genre that created further problems for the student e.g. writing a letter for which there was no clear purpose and/or without consideration about what a letter to a market trader would contain (and probably not the amount of gossip that was often presented); monologues too could be problematic when not managed well, either becoming interior monologues which then could not meet the brief or were often located at the same time as the events in the given passage, as if the maid was eavesdropping – an immediacy which didn't allow for development of ideas/narrative.

- Some located the account after Gatsby's death with the maid anxious/cross about no longer having a job. (Some of the accounts located after Gatsby's death were better controlled, but sometimes these ended abruptly with students not quite sure how to move from a retrospective account to the present time.)
- Choosing expressions that did not suit the time or represent an American accent or dialect (for example, mate, bloke) and attempted unconvincing phonological representations of accent (such as 'ya').
- Confusing the events in the two different locations, assuming that Daisy and Gatsby had a private moment leading to Daisy's tears at Gatsby's palace, not at Nick's house.
- Some students used very modern expressions that weren't entirely suited to the era, eg. 'You know what I'm on about', 'Any intel?'
- Offering only partial detail, either touching on Gatsby and Daisy's relationship and nothing further or offered a lot of moaning about how much work the maid had to do with nothing further. Some just wanted to focus on the parties and didn't really move on from that.

Question 7

Read the section of Chapter 8, from 'I had to greet each of the guests personally – Baba made sure of that; no one was going to gossip the next day about how he'd raised a son with no manners.' to 'I just sat in the dark for a while, knees drawn to my chest, looking up at the stars, waiting for the night to be over.'

This describes Amir's birthday party, a large event arranged by Baba. Assef and his parents attend the party and Assef gives Amir an unwelcome gift.

Recast the base text into an account that Assef's mother Tanya gives to a friend about Amir's thirteenth birthday party.

In your transformation you should consider:

- Tanya's views about her son Assef and his behaviour towards Amir
- her impressions of Baba, Amir and the party, and her feelings about her life in Afghanistan.

What students did well

- Thinking carefully about who Tanya might be presenting this account to, recognising that she's an outsider in Kabul, so cautious if talking to friends she didn't fully trust; more honest if writing a letter home where she had greater freedom to speak out and express her private feelings.
- Considering Tanya's reactions to the boys: fear of Assef and concern for Amir, or proud of Assef and puzzled that Amir could be so weak, especially considering who his father is, eg. how rude Amir was for rejecting Assef's polite invitation to play volleyball (most went for fear of Assef).
- Taking cues from the given passage to shape Tanya's character: silent whilst talking to Amir and Baba, eyes twitching, Tanya and Mahmood as much smaller than Assef, being led/steered by Assef, thus showing Assef's control and her nervousness around him and

what these might suggest about the balance in the parents' relationship with their son, Assef's interaction with Baba with comments about his façade/performance.

- Adopting interesting and different perspectives on Tanya's maternal feelings towards Assef, using knowledge of the wider novel to present her fear of Assef in the present, sometimes her fears for what he might do in the future effectively to foreshadow of later events and sometimes her admiration for his character based on the perception of his strength and assurance.
- Using Assef's birthday gift to Amir thoughtfully in different ways: for example, it's content as unknown to her, or as a surprise and a shock to her especially given her German background which some students used to show her abhorrence of the Nazi regime.
- Taking cues from the wider novel: in Tanya's response to Baba and his reputation (fighting a bear and opening an orphanage – both very impressive feats), comments about the brass knuckles; reflecting on the political situation in Afghanistan and roles of women, foreshadowing Assef's later actions and the rise of the Taliban.
- Using the base text detail well, identifying Hosseini's presentation of Tanya's nervousness. Some attributed Tanya's nervousness not just to Assef but to her position as a woman, or as an outsider, not really welcome in Afghan society and being judged, even by the friend she was giving this account to.
- Balancing speech and thought if presenting the account to a friend in Kabul. There were some effective pieces that presented Tanya's speech as respectful, subdued, in keeping with expectations of Afghan women whilst her thoughts betrayed her fear, anxiety, loneliness, sadness etc.
- Making some effective language choices to describe the party, commenting on the spectacle, fireworks, the food.
- Choosing genre aptly for the task: a letter worked well given that this afforded a convincing space to express her true feelings about her life in Afghanistan and her family in a private medium. (Some also used phone calls to good effect for a similar reason.)
- Making temporal decisions around the account, with most choosing to present it days after the party for the most impact in terms of reflection time.

Common misunderstandings

- Trying to cover both Tanya's fear of Assef and love/pride for him, becoming a bit muddled with what they were actually trying to communicate.
- Locating the account immediately after, or sometimes (if a monologue) during the party, thus not allowing for reflection or for the narrative to develop.
- Not including an account receiver, simply offering an internal monologue.
- Staying very close to the given passage, offering very little new by way of additional information or perspectives.
- Not recognising or acknowledging Tanya's German background, sometimes assuming she was native Afghan, Pashtun or sometimes from Pakistan. This shows a lack of knowledge of the base text.
- Ending very abruptly with no clear sense of a conclusion and the narrative lacking a sense of resolution.

- Using unconvincing settings, for example setting the account in coffee shops that resemble ones in the modern world rather than those that would have existed in 1970s Kabul.
- Not addressing an account-receiver; this was particularly seen in the monologues.
- If using the letter genre, sometimes not choosing an appropriate account receiver or using formal salutations/signoffs.
- An inability to find an effective way to refer to Baba except by this name and had similar issues if Hassan or Ali were mentioned; it would be unlikely that Tanya as more of an acquaintance would refer to the servants by their first names or would indeed know these.

Questions 2/4/6/8

Write a commentary explaining the decisions you have made in transforming the base text for this new account and the effects of reshaping Krakauer's/ Summerscale's/ Fitzgerald's/ Hosseini's original description.

AO2

What students did well

- Showing some thoughtful focus on narratorial decisions, considering the chosen form, narrative perspective and some commented on aspects of foreshadowing/in media res.
- Choosing the most interesting aspects of their own writing and saw the bigger picture and patterns in their own choices, evaluating these with insight.
- Writing developed paragraphs focusing on aspects of their choices: identifying the choices made, giving textual support for them and offering stylistic/linguistic analysis with a rationale for these in terms of the task and the text and an exploration of the effects.
- Selecting and exploring a range of language features they had used.

Common misunderstandings

- Very few commented on speech/thought choices, even if they had executed these nicely in their pieces.
- Not exploring their presentational decisions or characterisation choices beyond the maid's social class for *The Great Gatsby*.
- Offering limited focus on specific language choices, with a less precise focus than in previous years. Many students commented quite broadly on imagery, metaphor, symbols, motifs; others identified only a few isolated examples of their language choices such as an individual verb.
- Taking a chronological approach rather than organising their ideas into themes such as characterisation, which led to much repetition about the effects of choices.
- Identifying few features and linguistic choices that were made and so meeting the mark scheme descriptors for level 2 with broad discussion of one or two features.

There was also a tendency not to support the identification of language feature with an example.

AO4

What students did well

- Students are increasingly aware that they need to refer to the base text in some detail. Some made very effective comment about writers' stylistic and thematic focus and used this to comment on their own writing.
- Selecting the cues they had used from the both the base text extract and the wider text to explore how they used and adapted this to give a new perspective on the events and characters. For example, exploring their representation of the working class as underestimated in *The Great Gatsby* and the role of outsiders and culture shock in the presentation of Tanya and her life in Afghanistan for *The Kite Runner*.
- Exploring carefully their rationale for using features used by the base text writer in a similar or contrasting way, explicitly aware of their creative choices especially around characterisation.

Common misunderstandings

- Some referred only very briefly to the base text, sometimes limited to a couple of points, often only based on literal content from the given passages or general contextual comments (as ever, very prevalent for *The Great Gatsby*.)
- Some quoted lines from the given passages and then simply commented on the changes they'd made, eg. Fitzgerald uses 'x' so I changed the verb to 'x' instead.
- Some commented on the fact that they had directly lifted from the given passage as the language used aptly conveyed the character/theme etc. However, this did not allow for development of ideas or exploration of effects.
- There was a tendency for responses to refer to features used by the base text writer but to offer no support/evidence for these.
- Some struggled to explain the effects of using the same techniques as the base text writer beyond having something to say in the commentary.
- Speaking about narration choices only to identify viewpoint (eg homodiegetic or first/third person), a link to choice of pronouns and then a broad comment about allowing the character to express their thoughts or comment more objectively. This adds nothing meaningful to the commentary unless it is developed further and more specifically in light of the account/character/presentation of events.

AO5

What students did well

- Most students understand that this Assessment Objective assesses accuracy and organisation and so could achieve Level 4 upwards. Many had checked over their work in this section to correct spelling and punctuation errors.
- Clearly organising ideas using paragraphs (themed to help them access AO2 and AO4 marks), with most accurately written.

Common misunderstandings

- Lower marks tended to be awarded for those who did not use paragraphs or who wrote very brief commentaries.
- Some errors occurred when trying to use quotations from the texts. These often appeared as separate sentences and so did not make any grammatical sense within the context of their commentary.

Section B: Dramatic Encounters

Question 9

Refer to Act 3 Sc 4, beginning 'I will not leave him now till Cassio Be called to him.' And ending 'Zounds!' Exit

This interaction occurs near the beginning of the scene. Desdemona is attempting to persuade Othello to meet Cassio, whom he demoted following his drunken behaviour. Othello's own behaviour is becoming more erratic as he suspects both Desdemona and Cassio of betraying him.

Referring to these lines and other parts of the play, explore how and why Shakespeare presents characters' attitudes to trust at different points in the play.

What students did well

- Responded well to the question focus, finding many examples of different characters' attitudes to trust from across the play to choose from: Othello's changing trust of Desdemona; Desdemona's unfailing trust; Iago manipulating and exploiting others' trust (for both Othello and Roderigo); lack of trust driven by Othello's trust in Iago/his inexperience with women/his outsider role; Brabantio's loss of trust in his daughter; men's distrust of women and the fragility of trust.
- Used the question focus to link effectively to how attitudes to trust connected to the tragic genre and Aristotle's key ideas such as hamartia.

- Considered relevant contextual factors – some routine points about roles of women in Jacobean society but also some excellent critical responses to the play embedded well into the discussion.
- Explored aspects of genre in detail, reflecting on staging/proxemics/kinesics, which is often overlooked in responses to Shakespeare.
- Thought carefully about specific language choices with precision, although range was a little narrow for some students.

Common misunderstandings

- Students sometimes wanted to answer their own question, e.g. referring to race or appearance vs reality rather than trust.
- Offering descriptions of the given passage and wider scenes with little or no selection of quotations or identification of language features.
- Referring to wider scenes very generally, e.g. discussing Othello's change of character throughout the play but without specific reference to scenes, or specific quotes/features to illustrate these changes.
- Choosing to write almost entirely about Iago, ignoring the question focus.
- Relying on contextual factors to explore the question theme rather than focusing on language, thus often lacking close analysis of specific details.
- Using tragic terms without explanation, for example suggesting that events occurred after Othello's peripetia but without elaboration on what or where this was.

Question 10

Refer to Act 4 Sc3, beginning 'How goes it now? He looks gentler than he did.' And ending 'God me such uses send, not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend!'

This interaction occurs near the beginning of the scene. Desdemona is discussing her concerns about Othello's recent treatment of her with Emilia and generally about men's behaviour towards women.

Referring to these lines and other parts of the play, explore how and why Shakespeare presents characters' anxieties about others at different points in the play.

What students did well

- Explored the question focus through a range of lenses: Othello's anxieties driven by his lack of knowledge of women/Venetians etc.; Desdemona's anxieties over her relationship with Othello (contrasted with her assurance at the beginning of the play); Emilia's anxiety for Desdemona; anxieties as women about men and their judgement/behaviours.
- Giving very specific examples, using detailed labels and terminology, to explore how Shakespeare crafted anxiety into language choices.

- Linked in anxieties to contextual factors such as patriarchal attitudes and attitudes to ethnicity/race at the time.
- Seeing the dramatic irony in the women's anxieties in the starting extract.

Common misunderstandings

- Selecting very little from the starting extract and rushing to focus on Othello's anxieties elsewhere in the play.
- Describing rather than analysing the starting extract through exploring language choices.
- Overlooking aspects of gender and the relationship between Emilia and Desdemona in the starting extract.

Question 11

Refer to Act 1, beginning '[emotionally] You think of him! You see?' [Triumphantly] She thinks of him!' and ending '[resolutely] No, Kate.'

This interaction occurs near the end of Act 1. Kate wants to know if Ann is also waiting for Larry to return. Ann attempts to convince Kate that she is moving on with her life.

Referring to these lines and other parts of the play, explore how and why Miller presents characters' waiting for others at different points in the play.

What students did well

- Responded well to the given passages, focusing closely on different characters' relationships with each other and the different reasons that characters' were waiting for others: Kate futile wait for her son's return; Chris's waiting for Ann and desire to carry on with his life; the nervous and anticipatory waiting for George's arrival in Act 2 and the subsequent tragedy arising from this.
- Referenced contextual factors thoughtfully and with relevance, eg. post-war; mothers waiting for their sons, and also offered some useful critical responses to the play.
- Explored the domestic tragedy, with some offering really developed comments about how Kate's waiting for Larry added to this; some made sophisticated references to Ibsen and ideas about the well-made play to explore this too.

Common misunderstandings

- Offering quite descriptive responses, not focused closely on language detail, but with some relevance to the question.
- Relying very heavily on contextual factors at the expense of language detail.
- Offered little focus on dramatic conventions and stagecraft elements apart from stage directions – and sometimes not even these.

Question 12

Refer to Act 2 beginning 'I resent living next to the Holy Family.' and ending 'All right, Chris, all right. [They embrace as KELLER appears quietly on porch. ANN simply studies him.]

This interaction occurs near the beginning of Act Two. Kate is talking to Sue, the Kellers' next-door neighbour, whilst waiting for the family to come back into the garden. Chris and Ann share their concerns about the imminent arrival of Ann's brother George.

Referring to these lines and other parts of the play, explore how and why Miller presents characters' rejection of others at different points in the play.

What students did well

- Offered different interpretations based on rejection based on power dynamics between characters; rejection based on other characters' morals or values (for example, attitudes to materialism; Sue's use of Ann as a gateway to her anger as unable to express her feelings about her husband or the Keller family directly at them.

Common misunderstandings

- Taking a more literal approach to the question by simply identifying the rejection presented and not exploring/interpreting the significance of the rejection for the play as a whole.

Question 13

Refer to Scene 3, beginning

'[sharply] That's not fun, Stanley.' and ending '[STANLEY jumps up and, crossing to the radio, turns it off. He stops short at sight of BLANCHE in the chair. She returns his look without flinching. Then he sits again at the poker table. Two of the men have started arguing hotly]'

This interaction is near the beginning of the scene. Stella and Blanche have returned to the apartment after a night out together and want to get ready for bed. Stanley and his friends are still playing poker.

Referring to these lines and other parts of the play, explore how and why Williams presents characters' rudeness to others at different points in the play.

What students did well

- Used the given passage as a springboard to wider discussion of the question theme: considered different manifestations of rudeness, from language to proxemics/kinesics, or driven by different factors (Stanley's need to assert control over his environment/ wife/ friends; social factors; Blanche's disdain for the lower classes; gender roles/toxic masculinity).
- Reflected on patterns of language across the play, eg. Stanley's rudeness to Blanche as seen in his face-threatening acts, use of dismissive address terms and sentence moods such as imperatives.
- Considered contextual factors relevantly, eg. old/new South – useful for considering different expectations of social conduct/rudeness, or Blanche's delusions about her continued status as a Southern belle. Also, there was some valid comment about an abusive father reflected in Stanley/Stella's relationship.
- Referred to ideas about aspects of staging and genre in detail, reflecting on Aristotelian tragedy, unity of place, plastic theatre, diegetic/non-diegetic sound and how these contributed to the presentation of rudeness.
- Used the starting extract well to ground the discussion of different characters' rudeness and the ways that Williams presents this: Stanley's rudeness to Blanche as well as Stella and Blanche's rudeness about other inhabitants of Elysian Fields/New Orleans and the linguistic manifestations of the rudeness – there was some pleasing focus on Blanche's use of deictic language to describe other characters in a dehumanising way.
- Considered the significance of the location of the action in light of the question focus, such as the impact on the setting in Stanley and Stella's apartment on rudeness and how the wider setting of New Orleans linked to the characters' attitudes.
- Making appropriate selections from the wider play: effective popular choices were Blanche's rudeness to Eunice in Scene 1, Blanche's monologue about Stanley in Scene 4 and the incidents at the birthday party in Scene 8. These allowed students to explore specific language choices in these, linking rudeness to politeness and face as well as to the patterns of zoomorphism used by Blanche about Stanley.
- Seeing how rudeness contributed to the overarching tragedy as Blanche's inability to fit in within New Orleans and her rudeness to others keeps her as an outsider to the end. Interestingly, many explored with some sympathy Stanley's role as recipient of this rudeness throughout the play.

Common misunderstandings

- Identifying examples of 'rudeness' without discussing how/why this rudeness occurred; this did not allow for higher reward for AO2 as there was little interpretation of the significance of rudeness to the conflict between the characters.
- Referring only minimally to the given passage, sometimes offering only a single short quote which didn't always show full/clear understanding and led to a focus on an essay student had clearly planned for so sometimes drifting from the question focus.
- Offered unconvincing comment on some of the characters, eg. suggesting that Mitch was rude and impolite in scene 3.

- Students sometimes found links to stagecraft/dramatic conventions harder for this question outside of the starting extract in the extracts they selected themselves.
- Used the starting extract for Q14 as another section of the play to explore for rudeness; this could sometimes be made to work, but it also tended to make students blur the boundaries between the focus of the different questions.

Question 14

Refer to Scene 10, beginning

'Well, it's a red-letter night for us both.' And ending 'Do you hear me? Ha – ha – ha!' [He walks into the bedroom.]

This interaction occurs at the beginning of the scene. Blanche has been alone in the apartment since Stanley and Stella had to rush to the hospital in the middle of Blanche's birthday party. Stanley has finally returned, and Stella has remained in hospital in labour.

Referring to these lines and other parts of the play, explore how and why Williams presents characters' delusions at different points in the play.

What students did well

- Considering Blanche's descent into a more deluded state over the course of the play; Blanche's delusion over her ability to ever marry and be a conventional housewife; considered sympathetically why Blanche constructed her delusions (to escape the brutal reality of her circumstances and Allan's death); referred to language or aspects of staging that showed Blanche's loss of grip on reality as she took refuge in her delusions and explored the consequences of Blanche's passions leading to her seeking refuge in delusion.
- Focusing on Stanley's role in destroying Blanche's delusions in the starting extract and the linguistic tactics Williams uses to demonstrate Stanley's cruel manipulation of her in this part of Scene 10. Many students focused in detail and depth on Stanley's language choices here.
- Linking in Southern Gothic conventions really well to Williams's presentation of Blanche's delusion both as evidenced in language choices and in the use of stagecraft.
- Interpreting the question focus with some thought beyond just Blanche, although many focused on her with success. Some explored successfully Stella's delusions over her marriage through describing Stanley's violence as a 'fuss' and describing him as a 'lamb'; Stella's delusion over Stanley fuelled by her passion for him and evaluating the consequences of this for Blanche by exploring Scene 11. Some also focused on Mitch's willingness to be deluded by Blanche and his cruel rejection of her in Scene 10.
- Showing a confident focus on tragedy for this question, seeing how Williams's uses Blanche's delusions to contribute and symbolise the tragic trajectory right up to Scene 11.
- Confidently focusing on aspects of staging, exploring these insightfully in light of how Williams uses these to contribute to the presentation of Blanche's delusions. These were often well linked to observations about plastic and expressionist theatre, as well as being explored as pattern across the whole play. This was specially seen in the discussion of the

light motif in the use of the paper lantern. In fact, exploration of the stagecraft and genre conventions led to successful selections from the wider play, as students evaluated Williams's deliberate crafting choices of Blanche's delusions.

- Exploring the significance of Shep Huntleigh across the play as representative of Blanche's delusions, evaluating his role in these and her knowingness/lack of knowledge about what he represents.
- Reflecting on patterns of language across the play, eg. Blanche's change of language from extended monologue to fragmented speech in scene 10, compared with her language use elsewhere etc.
- Selecting language feature with a sense of how Williams uses these; describing the shift of Blanche's monologue to minimal responses as a counter to Stanley's shift from minimal responses to an impassioned attack.
- Referring to different productions to consider different directorial decisions in presenting delusion, eg. the revolving stage at the Young Vic to reflect Blanche's precarious grip on reality.

Common misunderstandings

- Reinterpreting the question focus, sometimes replacing the word delusion with fantasy, perhaps losing some of the subtlety in the meaning of delusions.
- Not understanding what delusions meant and so found it difficult to select from both the extract and find other parts of the play to explore.
- Offering less secure interpretations focused on Stanley's delusions but struggling either to find convincing evidence for his delusions or to define his delusions.
- Relying on contextual comment that wasn't always relevant to the question theme, eg. Williams' sexuality/alcoholism.
- Students sometimes made less successful selections from the wider play, such as Scene 5 and Blanche's interaction with the young man which they then struggled to link to her delusions.
- Ignoring dramatic genre conventions and stagecraft elements completely.

Question 15

Refer to the section, beginning (page 16) 'I'll call him and tell him not to come.' and ending (page 19)

'I don't want her to throw away that chance for...well, for Andy.'

This interaction occurs near the beginning of the play. Andy's grandparents Patricia and Brian have arrived for Andy's birthday celebrations. Patricia is sharing her concerns about Carol's life with Claire, during which Carol discovers that Andy might miss his party.

Referring to these lines and other parts of the play, explore how and why Kinnear presents characters' feelings about luck at different points in the play.

What students did well

- This was only answered by a tiny minority of students, so senior examiners have been unable to comment.

Common misunderstandings

- As above.

Question 16

Refer to the section, beginning (page 38) 'How long have you lived in Brighton, Mark?' and ending (page 41) 'Claire, I want to be here. I want to.'

This interaction occurs near the middle of the play. Claire's new boyfriend Mark has arrived and is meeting Claire's family for the first time.

Referring to these lines and other parts of the play, explore how and why Kinnear presents characters' judgements of others at different points in the play.

What students did well

- Stayed focused on the question that was set, referring in some detail to ideas about judgement and selected appropriately from across the play.
- Focused on aspects of stagecraft (e.g. pauses) and how these contributed to the presentation of judgement.
- Explored different kinds of judgement – such as external ones like the healthcare professionals, Carol's self-judgement, Patricia's harsh judgement of Ian and Ian's passive acceptance of judgements made to him and about him.
- Thought about different characters and what they represented e.g. Brian as injecting humour, Mark as the outsider so Carol being conscious of being judged by him; Ian as no longer a member of the family and being judged differently by different characters.
- Introduced some relevant contextual comment: political ideas about care arrangements, the NHS, ideas about a domestic drama, relevant biographical information.

Common misunderstandings

- Ignoring stagecraft elements contributed to the question focus.

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