

**UNIVERSITY OF MALTA**

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

**ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**MAY 2013**

**EXAMINERS' REPORT**

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE**

**EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

**SEC ENGLISH LITERATURE  
MAY 2013 SESSION  
EXAMINERS' REPORT**

**STATISTICAL DATA** The Table below summarises the distribution of Grades for Options A and B:

**Distribution of Grades**

| Grade        | 2A   | 2B  | Total | %    |
|--------------|------|-----|-------|------|
| 1            | 122  |     | 122   | 4.5  |
| 2            | 186  |     | 186   | 6.9  |
| 3            | 482  |     | 482   | 17.9 |
| 4            | 443  | 107 | 550   | 20.5 |
| 5            | 330  | 185 | 515   | 19.2 |
| 6            |      | 166 | 166   | 6.2  |
| 7            |      | 140 | 140   | 5.2  |
| U            | 234  | 218 | 452   | 16.8 |
| Absent       | 21   | 55  | 76    | 2.8  |
| <b>Total</b> | 1818 | 871 | 2689  | 100  |

**PAPER 1**

**General Comments**

This year's Literary Criticism texts and questions were not more difficult than those which are normally set in this part of the SEC English Literature Examination. However, markers noted that candidates' performance seems to have levelled itself and there is little evidence of improvement. This tendency is not also true of the candidates' essay writing. This seems to indicate that, whereas these candidates are well able to reproduce information they have been given, they are not capable of carrying out analyses of their own on an individual, *ad hoc* basis. This is not good news for the study and appreciation of literature in our country. It is not encouraging, for example, to note that while a history of Paper One would clearly show that candidates are not expected to know more than a few figures of speech, markers come across hundreds of incorrect answers when it comes to identifying and/or spelling these. Even worse is the fact that many more seem unable to even attempt an answer that 'feels' concerned with the effectiveness of these devices.

**SECTION A  
Specific Comments**

- 1 Most candidates answered this correctly.
- 2
  - a. The dilemma to this seemingly straightforward question was between the neutral and the positive. A comfortable majority opted for the correct answer, though a sizeable number of Paper A and B candidates fell for the neutral description. The reasons behind this seem to point to various options, particularly the words used in the first stanza which might have been interpreted as unbiased.
  - b. The candidates who answered the previous question correctly had no difficulty locating the keywords which highlight the positivity of the girl's description in stanza 1, acknowledging words/phrases such as *young sailor, fresh, as blue as the sky, clean (was his skin)*. Very few candidates were awarded 1 mark. In most cases, this was the result of superficiality in the answer. The candidates who opted for 'neutral' in question

2a did actually mention a few of the suggested quotes, but this inevitably failed to link with the argument of neutrality.

- 3 This meant either a two or a zero – and more than 90% obtained no points. The indefinite article could have been used as a clue but sadly the vast majority of both Paper A and B candidates did not know the correct literary term and so they came up with an array of words (some literary terms in their own right like *onomatopoeia*, *allegory*, *enjambment*) and an unprecedented number of coined/made-up words.

The fact that only about 8% of the candidates knew the correct answer needs to be addressed. More emphasis should be made on literary terms. The most popular (incorrect) entry was *enjambment*, which is wholly unrelated to the idea of an *extended metaphor*. It is well worth noting that the majority of the candidates who answered this question correctly fared well in the whole poetry section.

- 4 a. Most of the candidates answered this question correctly.
- b. Paper A candidates were slightly more confident in this question. The candidates did try to link the /s/ sound to the sea, particularly the sound of waves and motion. Hardly anyone mentioned the underwater silence, or anything related to the slow passage of time. Nonetheless, the overall effort was rewarded accordingly, and all plausible answers were awarded full marks. Superficial answers which made no mention to sound/effect were not acknowledged.
- 5 By far, this was the most challenging question for the candidates. The word 'effectiveness' was overlooked yet again. Paper A candidates must have assumed the most obvious answer – and in fact, a very good number opted for a literal explanation, like *the sand scrubs the skin and bones / he is in contact with the sand*; a number of candidates visualized the sailor as a corpse washed onto the beach. These kinds of answers prove that not everything was clear for some candidates. Very few succeeded in linking the sand to the eroding process or to the slow passage of time, and only a handful referred to the onomatopoeic sound. As regards Paper B candidates, the analysis contained little of what was expected. A sizeable number were vague and mentioned that the sailor lives by the beach so there is sand on his body; the most popular answers indicated that the sailor was dead. One cannot fail to mention that some candidates changed the sailor to a soldier, which sheds light as to the ambiguity of the answers to the questions that follow. Such mistakes can definitely be avoided. This question posed difficulties in general since very few could climb the analytical ladder.
- 6 Very few made the link to the feeling of the persona and most kept to the literal by referring to the beginning and end of the day. Most answers referred to the sailor going out to work in the morning and returning in the evening. Inspired answers referred to the persona's state of mind, and appreciated and analysed the *dark* of the day with reference to the girl's disillusionment.
- 7 The persona and Leslie Norris became one in multiple entries. Candidates did not make a distinction between the poet and the persona; this could either be due to carelessness or lack of knowledge. Paper A candidates were more careful in their answers and a good number answered correctly. They quoted the words/phrases and explained them in a coherent manner. A number of Paper A candidates did not understand the last four lines in which the persona ponders on a bleak and lonely future. They assumed that the black road is referring to pollution and the phrase *the flat and empty fields* implies that nature is being destroyed in order to build a new road. In spite of featuring in the last part of the poetry section, this question was quite undemanding. Paper B candidates also scored less in this question. A good number wrote that Leslie Norris (the poet) was infatuated by the sailor, and that the word *cardigan* hints at monotony since a cardigan is a boring item of clothing.

A respectable number of candidates did manage to select valid quotes and link them with the negativity of the context.

- 8 The high achievers in this question managed to strike a balance between analysis and grounding their analysis in the poem. Others gave answers that were valid but generally evidenced a degree of repetition, vagueness and lack of coherence. The ones that did not do well in this question spun around the idea of the destruction of the environment, frustrated farmers and a sailor who trapped the girl locking her in a room. Admittedly, such limited answers were few and far between.

## **SECTION B Specific Comments**

- 1 Answers were varied with many opting for answer (b) but with a considerable number in both papers opting for (a). The latter based their answer solely on the fact that by now Mary had learnt to dress by herself and ignored the way Mary focuses on her surroundings and the way she reacts.
- 2 Many candidates were able to suggest words and/or phrases from the first paragraph to indicate the sense of magic. Unfortunately, some were able to pinpoint the right quote but then did not explain how it contributed to the sense of magic. An example that typifies this reads *tender fluting sounds – the birds were chirping together* which does not give any explanation as to why this is magical. Other candidates completely disregarded the rubric that indicated the quotes should be from paragraph one and gave answers from all over the passage.
- 3 Some candidates disregarded the question's instructions which required them to not just quote but to also explain the reasons for their choice. Many answers correctly referred to the use of repetition and the human qualities given to the vegetation to bring it to life. Others simply wrote that the heat of the sun would make the plants grow.
- 4 The majority, in both options, were able to identify the figure of speech and to show the effect. There were some, however, that simply explained the simile. One needs to point out here that candidates should, by now, know how to spell 'simile'.
- 5 There were many good answers that indicated the sense of urgency and the spurring of thoughts into action. Strangely enough, some candidates felt that there was a time lapse of months and even years.
- 6 This question elicited a whole range of answers. Acceptable answers were those that referred to Mary's determination, a sense of urgency and the creation of suspense. Many candidates said that Mary's parents did not allow her to go out and therefore she was disobeying them. Others mentioned that Mary's family was rich so the door was securely locked so thieves could not enter. Others said that Mary is now a grown up and she wants her freedom.
- 7 There were a few good answers that referred to the use of plosives, the contrast between the bright colours and the pleasant sounds in the passage and the dark colours and the caw- caw of the bird or the fact that Mary took in every detail about the bird starting with the size and going on to the feathers and the colour. The majority, however, just mentioned that it made her nervous or that she was afraid of it.
- 8 There were many answers that were focused on the question and presented in a coherent paragraph. The better answers were those that linked the images to Mary's feelings and

behaviour. Some answers were no more than a list of images or quotations. Unfortunately, quite a few B candidates did not answer this question.

## PAPER IIA

### General Comments

A good number of the option A answers were of a very high standard and a pleasure to read. These showed a good knowledge and understanding of the set texts. They were focused, the content was valid, and responses were well structured and developed.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the option B candidates. Although there were answers that were of an acceptable standard, many were not. Generally answers lacked structure and consisted of one paragraph with no introduction or conclusion. At times, answers suggested a lack of clear knowledge of the texts. Linguistic competence left much to be desired.

Although markers have repeatedly commented on the importance of reading the rubric carefully, many candidates in both options still answer all three questions on a text with the result that they lose valuable time and marks. Also candidates need to write the number of the question they attempt.

### Specific Comments DRAMA

- 1 Few chose this but answers were generally good.
  - a. Candidates were able to indicate the correct circumstances.
  - b. This was also correctly answered. They referred to the friendship between the two and that Sebastian needed Antonio's advice.
  - c. Answers showed an awareness of the importance of friendship in the play. They referred to the Captain and Viola's friendship, that between Viola and the Duke, Sebastian and Antonio and Sir Toby and Sir Andrew.
- 2 Quite a popular choice. Very good answers bringing out the difference in character. The candidates showed they were well prepared on *Twelfth Night*.
- 3 Very few candidates attempted this question. The answers tended to be satisfactory but limited to Malvolio's hypocrisy.
- 4 This was quite popular.
  - a. Candidates were able to explain that Bassanio needed more money from Antonio and why he needed it.
  - b. Answers were mixed. Some were good, others were superficial, and others referred to the choice of caskets as the major complication which was out of point.
  - c. The friendship between Antonio and Bassanio was mostly explored.
- 5 There were a couple of good answers but the theme of mercy was generally superficially treated. One cannot understand how Portia's speech about the quality of mercy can possibly be ignored in a discussion of the theme.
- 6 Very few candidates attempted this question. There were no exceptionally good or poor answers. The few essays on this question were acceptable.
- 7 This was popular.
  - a. Answers to this part were disappointing. Some candidates failed to recognize the context and many of those who did, gave a very short answer that did not analyse the soliloquy.

- b. Many good answers that showed an awareness of the part played by both the witches and Lady Macbeth were given here.
- 8 Some candidates took the banquet scene to be the one in which Duncan's murder took place. Others who focused on the correct scene did not refer to Macbeth's behaviour at all. The majority of answers were good with regard to the content of the scene but were not able to sufficiently indicate why the scene is a turning point.
- 9 This was the most popular question. The performance was very mixed. There were many excellent answers; however, many did not refer to the witches' betrayal of Macbeth which ultimately led to his downfall.
- 10 The answers to this question were generally acceptable. The candidates' responses evidenced sensitivity to Eddie's conflicts. Content was valid and weakness tended to be the result of poor essay structuring rather than ideas.
- 11 This question was also rather popular. Unfortunately, however, very few of the candidates seemed clear about what constitutes values and a number of answers were out of point. Failures of this nature create a feeling that candidates are not really 'in touch' with the text.
- 12 Most answers were limited to narrative. A few were good showing an acceptable understanding of the theme of revenge in the play.
- 13 Only a few of the answers gave both sides of the picture. Many were either out of point or failed to refer to the positive effect of Amy's birth on the relationship between Alice and Helen and Nan.
- 14 There was one excellent answer to this that contrasted Billy's attitude before Kes with his attitude after Kes and referred to specific examples. Most candidates referred only to the incident during the English lesson and Mr. Farthing's interest in Bill but did not mention what Billy's previous behaviour was like.
- 15 This was very popular. Candidates perceived Billy's mother as a bad mother but often did not indicate how it affected Billy's behaviour. However, there were some very good answers.

## PROSE

- 1 The few candidates who answered this question were able to argue that Viktor's motives in creating the creature did not stem from evil intentions. In his pursuit of science, Viktor created a monster that he could not control and that ultimately destroyed his life and that of his dear ones. Candidates were able to use close references to the text to illustrate their arguments that Viktor's desire to create life and take on a godlike status overshadowed his sense of responsibility and long-term consequences of his scientific dabbling. The inhumane treatment of the monster in denying him a mate stem from Viktor's fear of having created something beyond his comprehension. Even from the few answers, it is evident that students know this book well and have understood its thematic implications.
- 2 Once more, a question chosen by few candidates but with valid and well-referenced answers. Students were able to use the text to validate their argument that in spite of the positive connotations with the word 'gift', the creature soon realised that both life and language have their disadvantages too. Through the use of language, the creature could understand more what was going on around him and how unwanted and feared he was. His life was in jeopardy not only from Viktor but all those he came in contact with. Students were able to focus on salient moments from the novel and unlike what usually happens, they were able to focus their writings to relate to the essay's title rather than offer all that they

know about the book.

- 3 A very small number of candidates chose this question. The essays presented were focused and provided valid points. Students were able to point out that Viktor brought on his social isolation through his irresponsible actions driven by ambition. On the other hand, the creature was forced to the outskirts of society by fear and prejudice stemming from his abnormal looks. The creature did not choose to stay away from people but was pushed into seclusion.
- 4 Most essays took the form of a list of incidents from the stories pasted together to form a brief summary with sporadic points. Some candidates seem to have yet to learn to present their arguments and use the text only as an illustration of their points. Usually priority is given to the narration of the incident over the argument that they are trying to put across. More focus on this area is needed, it seems, when preparing to write literature essays. Sometimes candidates also have a tendency to write all that they know or all they have prepared about a novel without discriminating between the relevant information and other material that loses the essay's focus. Candidates who answered this question many times failed to address, or at least to address adequately, the different techniques utilised by Dahl to make his story interesting. Many even confused the word *characteristics* with *character* and therefore spoke only about different characters to be found in the stories, giving superficial or repeated points about why the characters make the narratives a good read. Some could only refer to the twist at the end of the stories as the characteristic which made the stories interesting and spent the whole essay repeating the same point in different words. Since this question addressed a more technical aspect of Dahl's story writing, the answers given seem to highlight either a lack in addressing these issues or else students' disregard of or inability to grasp the importance of these techniques in literature.
- 5 Apart from the usual essays made up of mainly paraphrasing of the stories, there were infrequent well-structured ones. The better essays were able to pinpoint the gradual build-up of intensity created in the stories through subtle hints, vague allusions, deceptive exteriors of characters and places, seemingly innocent comments, which all come together to intensify a sense of dread. The two stories that were mostly used as examples were: *The Landlady* and *Man from the South*. The good essays referred to examples like the nice looking woman in contrast to her eerie hands, comments like *we don't want to go breaking the rules at this stage ...*, the appeal to the senses of taste and smell, and the lingering ending that leaves a lot to the readers' imagination. The same characteristics are referred to in *Man from the South* – the man's immaculate appearance contrasted with his uneven teeth, his mysterious accent, the youth of the boy and his ambition, the words used like *chop*, the long drawn out ritual and the precise equipment used, and then the references to the missing fingers.
- 6 This was also quite popular and the chosen stories were in their majority appropriate. The most popular were *Neck* and *The Way up to Heaven*. Both revenge and its outcomes were explored and some candidates well exceeded the 'acceptable boundary' of word limit. Quantity can be unruly if not handled with skill, and this often resulted in excessive storytelling and little analysis. A small number of candidates opted for stories which offer hardly any relevance to the theme of revenge. An example would be *The Landlady* – Billy Weaver is just unlucky prey and hardly a possible target for revenge. Candidates have to be careful when they come to choose the appropriate story to link with any given theme/s.
- 7 The candidates were spoilt for choice as the novella offers multiple instances of disloyalty, particularly the pigs' betrayal of the whole farm, Squealer's propaganda and the deplorable annihilation of faithful Boxer. Very few (higher end) essays mentioned Mollie's desertion or Benjamin's passivity, which might mean that these points were not so easily identifiable within the context of betrayal. The candidates opted for the most obvious ones, which are, in their own right legitimate. There were a number of structured essays which helped

develop the discussion better. Answers were generally valid. Candidates made use of quotes to back up arguments, and which improved the general essay quality.

- 8 Such titles seem to focus students' answers more than general essay titles. The narrowing down of material is done for the students through the question's rubric and therefore aids them in structuring a better answer. Students need to choose their material well, always bearing in mind the essay title.
- 9 Another popular question among students. Most answers focused mainly on the language used by the pigs, Squealer's manipulative words and the change in the wording of the commandments. Some students went beyond these references to even include Boxer's language of encouragement to the other animals as they pointed out that this also betrayed the other animals into thinking that the pigs were always right. Most of the essays were focused, and apart from the usually irrelevant information when candidates opted to summarise whole episodes, the material offered was well chosen.
- 10 This was not a very popular question. The candidates who attempted it were mostly unaware of the *metaphorical* remoteness that existed between the Jews and the Nazis. The essay was mostly written at face value, in that Bruno's father was against the Jews and did not consider them as their equal. Candidates offered little analysis and some focused on the plot and failed to mention significant points like the relationship between Bruno and Shmuel which transcended all borders.
- 11 Very few candidates opted for this question. Although the set question clearly qualifies the speaker, it does not reveal too much. Only the very novel-confident candidates could place the quote in context and explain its relevance to the novel. The lower achieving candidates did not score well enough in this particular essay.
- 12 This was the favourite question about this novel. Obviously the main focus was Shmuel and Bruno's friendship that shines as a beacon of hope amidst all the degradation. Since friendship and children are two of the main themes in the book, students were well prepared to answer such a question. The fact that many essays mainly focused on this friendship became a good structuring device for the essays and helped to deviate from the usual narration for narration's sake.
- 13 Only a few candidates chose this question and the answers lacked focus.
- 14 Very few candidates answered this question. The answers indicated that students were able to see the similarities between characters present on the battlefield and those who lived in the village. Better structuring and use of information would have improved these essays.
- 15 Very few students opted to answer this question. This being the main relationship existing in the novel, students had a lot of information about it. Of course, the main focal point of the essays became the love triangle with Molly. Once again, the fact that students only had one important focal point, seemed to have helped them structure their essays better.
- 16 One of the most popular questions and, in general, very straightforward. Answers were generally not impressive, however, they showed relevant knowledge and relevant quotes, while many sealed the arguments with valid conclusions. The essays were generally fluent and the set question was kept in focus with the usual lapse into narrative being more contained. All candidates agreed to the idea that Sade deserves a crown and therefore with the fact that Sade was the perfect choice for a name. The higher achieving candidates mentioned how Sade, who was moneyless and friendless, burdened with the sickening image of her murdered mother, had to bear in silence and take care of her younger brother. They also mentioned Sade's courage and the final brave attempt, through Mr Seven o' Clock, to bring her father's plight to the attention of the British public.

- 17 Answers were, more often than not, unimpressive. The title is bursting with points to be discovered, like the political conflict, dishonest characters, culture diversity and the ordeal of being new to the country. The average candidate discussed the fact that Sade and Femi have no parents and how this affects their life. A lot of candidates indulged in excessive narrative which blurred any genuine attempt at analysis. Personal response was not given priority.
- 18 Although the candidates who attempted this question were just a minority, the quality was quite good apart from a few superficial answers. In order to answer this question, candidates had to be knowledgeable about the story within the story. Candidates were not penalized for reproducing the story in a concise manner as this was essential groundwork for the discussion that followed. The leap in quality which set the higher achievers apart was the weaving of the fable with the novel itself. The main aim was the struggle for survival. A number of candidates mentioned the various proverbs which Sade recalled throughout the novel, which strengthened the analysis. The successful candidates strongly agreed with the fable as being extremely relevant to the story.

## PAPER IIB

### Specific Comments DRAMA

- 1 Answers to this were not focused on the key words *compare and contrast* and were often superficial and confused.
- 2 Generally candidates could write relevantly about Malvolio's ambition and its consequence but this was only half the answer.
- 3 Few answered this and, although it was a straightforward question, candidates did not really identify the fun element in the play except for the trick played on Malvolio. A couple of candidates picked on Orsino's love for Olivia as an element of fun.
- 4 There was only one very good answer to this as most answers were rather limited and referred only to one or two character traits and the choice of casket without indicating how the choice made reflects the character. Some dealt with only one prince.
- 5 Sadly the candidates who chose this were not knowledgeable about humour. Some simply narrated the plot. Not a single candidate referred to the scene between Launcelot Gobbo and his father which is an obvious example of humour in the play.
- 6 This was the most popular question. Most opted for a balance, giving aspects of Shylock as both a villain and a victim. A good level of answers on this text.
- 7 This was a popular choice. Some did not take all three visions into consideration and some were completely out of point.
- 8 Banquo's character was analysed well but otherwise many answers did not refer to his prowess as a soldier, his lack of trust in the witches, the fact that, unlike Macbeth, he did not allow ambition to dominate him and that what Macbeth mostly feared in Banquo was his loyalty of nature.
- 9 Once more candidates showed an inability to *compare and contrast*. Answers tended to lack close reference to the play. There was no mention of Duncan being the rightful king and Macbeth a usurper, no reference to Macbeth's soliloquy giving reasons as to why he shouldn't kill Duncan or to the state of Scotland under Macbeth's reign.

- 10 This was a very popular question. Answers showed a good knowledge of the play and were focused on why Eddie objects to Rodolpho as a suitor.
- 11 Some good answers to this but others did not contrast the earlier Catherine with the later one.
- 12 This question was chosen by quite a number of candidates. Though not exceptional, the majority of the answers were acceptable.
- 13 The question asked for the role of characters but candidates, at best, gave a character sketch rather than discussed the role.
- 14 The least popular choice. Many restricted themselves to the relationship between Billy's mother and her two sons. Few wrote above average answers.
- 15 This was very popular and there were some good answers that linked the situations to real life. Some answers were limited to a narration of the plot without any attempt to link situations with real life.

## PROSE

- 1 Most candidates focused on narrating the incidents but did not reflect on them. Essays proved to be a number of episodes simply placed one after the other without much attempt at achieving cohesion in the essay.
- 2 Some candidates chose to answer this question and they gave adequate information from the novel dealing with the issue of families. As expected, most essays were comprised of summaries of relevant episodes from the novel.
- 3 The essays about this question mainly focused on the theme of selfishness rather than that of self-sacrifice.
- 4 About one third of candidates opted for this question. A number of candidates wrote about only one character, and therefore lost several points. Many barely managed to obtain one fourth of the available marks. On a more positive note, the three female characters were 'received well' by candidates and the majority showed valid knowledge; some even used quotes to back up answers. The most common choices were Mrs Bixby and Lady Tutton. Paper B candidates were not penalized for narrating the story although the focus had to be on the characters rather than the plot. Many candidates ignored this fact. There were very few valid answers.
- 5 Most essays were merely summaries of the whole story which, given the nature of the question, proved to be adequate answers. The two stories mostly chosen by candidates were *Royal Jelly* and *The Landlady*.
- 6 Not surprisingly perhaps, most of the answers to this question were essentially limited to summaries. Most students were able to choose the right stories to connect with the essay's title. In spite of the fact that there were so many fitting stories to choose from, some of the candidates resorted to stories that did not quite fit in with the question's demands. For example, some chose the old lady in *The Way up to Heaven* who did not exactly cheat her husband.
- 7 This was the least popular question and very few candidates attempted it. The result was often below average since the content was very hazy and hardly attempted to offer any valid response. There were a few candidates who mentioned one or two valid points. The rest of the answers were most superficial. Specific episodes in the novella posed a challenge to the

Paper B candidates as they could not rely on their knowledge of the generic too much.

- 8 This question was within reach of most candidates. The majority were knowledgeable about Boxer and mentioned a number of valid points. Expression and presentation distinguished the better scorers from those who achieved less. Many mentioned the fact that Boxer refers to the working class, quoted *I will work harder* and stated how he managed to help out on the farm. The cruel betrayal by the pigs towards the end was also highlighted and discussed.
- 9 The candidates wrote some good essays that explored the different leadership styles on the farm. However, there were some candidates who mainly focused on the pigs' leadership and only gave sparse details about the other styles of leadership that were not enough to create a contrast or comparison.
- 10 Answers mainly focused on the degree of comfort in the house and also on the fact that Bruno felt lonely in Auschwitz.
- 11 Mostly adequate answers that mainly focused on the need for friendship that both boys had.
- 12 The few candidates that chose this question mainly focused on the boundaries between children/adults and prisoners/outside. Most essays were adequate in that they gave relevant information and concentrated on the right episodes from the book to illustrate the main points.
- 13 Only a couple of candidates answered this question. The answers were below average, failing to achieve the attempted task well.
- 14 As with the question above, there were only a couple of candidates who attempted this question. Again, the quality of the answers was below the desired level, failing to acknowledge the pivotal moment in the novel which highlights Charlie's instinctive goodness and his defiance of cruel and mindless authority.
- 15 Not attempted.
- 16 Most candidates answered this question. The question asked for a retelling of the night of the tragedy, and how things unfolded on that day. Some candidates ignored the fact that they were asked to refer to the novel. Secondly, a number of answers digressed from the required task and focused on Sade's time in England. They did not focus on the attack and its aftermath. The possible cause could be the inappropriate reading of the set question. Candidates must have noticed the word *England* and regarded it in isolation, not in the context of the question. Careful reading of set questions is a must. Very few candidates mentioned the reason behind this cold blooded shooting of the mother or the underlying crusade against outspoken journalists by General Abacha.
- 17 A number of candidates ignored the question and wrote about all four characters. This resulted in sketchy work. Candidates who perform such errors normally perform poorly, and this was no exception. Another hazard was writing about only one character, thus reducing any possible gain by half. When analyzing character, candidates should be more cautious about highlighting the obvious. The best scripts contained a mixture of the physical description, character and role in the story. A few candidates confused Marcia with Mariam, and this was not just a glitch on names, but rather a full swapping of characters. In this case, Marcia became Mariam and was portrayed as the victim who shared Sade's skin colour and stigma from other people.
- 18 The essays were mostly crisply relevant, though there were very few of them. The candidates mentioned the Brass Buttons in the Nigerian context and school bullies like

Marcia and Donna from the British context. The lighter incident was mentioned at large, and how Sade seemed powered by the invisible force of her mother's pieces of advice to overcome each bully. Some also mentioned Folarin as living proof that there is the hope of justice which will eventually triumph. This factor was quite relevant in most essays.

## POETRY

In Section B of the Second Paper of this examination, candidates, both those sitting for the 'A' option and those sitting for the 'B' option, were asked to choose from three titles based on the selection of poems from the anthology *The New Dragon Book of Verse*.

Candidates opted evenly for the three questions set in both the 'A' and the 'B' paper. As is normal with this examination, the quality of the candidates' answers to the poetry essay questions ranged from the excellent to the mediocre. It must be stated, however, that the majority of candidates showed a good level of familiarity with the set texts. There were a few essays which were simply excellent.

Some Paper 'B' essays were of a good standard and one feels that these candidates could have opted for the more demanding paper. This said, however, it is also true that there were several essays (especially, but not exclusively, among the Paper 'B' scripts) which had obviously been written by candidates who had either studied next to nothing, or had failed to understand the explanations of the texts they were given.

Essays assessed as above average showed a good level of engagement with the title, included valid content (though not necessarily more than two pages in length), contained a number of relevant and properly-introduced quotations, were well-structured (with an introduction, two or more paragraphs in the body and a conclusion summing up the main points the candidate would have made in the essay) and were written in acceptable English. Other essays evidenced familiarity with the poems tackled but had some shortcomings such as weak expression, inaccurate statements (stating that the boy in Spender's poem was bullied at school, for example), the use of irrelevant quotations, poor sentence and essay structuring, etc. Candidates who earned average/ below average scores presented more than one 'insufficiency', such as poor knowledge of the texts, excessive brevity, expression so weak as to hinder comprehension, etc.

A positive comment one cannot but make here is one regarding the candidates' excellent and interesting response to Alan Brownjohn's poem *We Are Going to See the Rabbit*. This year's scripts indicate that candidates had been taught this poem very well and that students were well aware of the environmental 'lessons' it seeks to teach. Candidates also wrote good essays on Shakespeare's *Sonnet LX* and Shelley's *Ozymandias*. Teachers appear to have drawn a comparison between these two poems' principal theme in class, laying emphasis on their treatment of the ephemeral nature of the things of this world and the relentless onward flow of time. The results, in terms of the essays this year's candidates wrote about these poems, were encouraging.

Chairperson  
2013 Examination Panel