

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

SEC

ENGLISH LITERATURE

May 2012

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

**SEC ENGLISH LITERATURE
MAY 2012 SESSION
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STATISTICAL DATA The table below summarises the distribution of Grades for Options A and B

Distribution of Grades

Grade	2A	2B	Total	%
1	113		113	3.9
2	182		182	6.3
3	509		509	17.7
4	450	109	559	19.5
5	283	168	451	15.7
6		209	209	7.3
7		136	136	4.7
U	320	317	637	22.2
Absent	13	64	77	2.7
Total	1870	1003	2873	100

PAPER 1

SECTION A

**Specific
Comments**

- 1 This year's text for the Unseen Poetry Criticism Exercise was the poem '*Bruises Heal*', by Andrew Fusek and Polly Peters. This text, which deals with bullying in a scholastic setting, appears to have appealed greatly to the candidates, many of whom answered the questions set in full and with evident interest. The content of the poem was undoubtedly accessible to the candidates. Many also gave indications that they had been helped by the definitions provided in the paper, since they referred to them in their answers. Only a handful of candidates, in fact, failed to answer Question 1 – a basic comprehension question which required candidates to identify the text's Subject Matter among a selection of possible options.
- 2 Question 2 also appears not to have posed major difficulties. The majority of the students answered it correctly, stating that the poets' use of direct speech contributed to the poem's realism, made the reader feel as if he/she was witnessing the bullying and made the reader aware of the sort of language that was used by the bully to torment her victim. One cannot not add, however, that very few concluded that the emphasis is on the verbal rather than the physical. The answers were valid but not very specific. This is a typical characteristic which is seen when a candidate is required to comment about the effect.
- 3

*'She uses stealth, and poisoned words
And wears them like a cloak.'*

Paper A candidates did relatively well in this answer. Most of them understood the idea of evil and regal superiority. Those who were awarded the maximum mark drew attention to

the connotations, sinister or otherwise, of the word '*cloak*' – its association with evil witches and queens and its correlation with leader figures (monarchs, generals, *etc.*). Some of the better candidates also remarked that the poets used the words '*wears them like a cloak*' because the bully is the opposite of the cloaked superhero figure of recent popular culture - she torments people rather than saves them from torment. There were instances where candidates did not explain themselves very well, and relied too much on the meanings provided alongside the poem itself, ignoring the word '*cloak*'. A number of answers simply stated that *the bully uses the evil words every day*, or that *she puts them on and off like a coat*. In general though, most of them did acceptably well.

- 4 This was answered correctly (*alliteration* or *consonance*) by a good 98% of the candidates. As expected, the same percentage of correct answers was not found when candidates attempted to write about the effect of this sound symbolism. The better candidates' answers drew the examiner's attention to the fact that the repetition of the plosive 'p' (several of the better candidates actually identified the sound as a plosive) is meant to emphasise the repetitive fashion in which the bullying was carried out and the fact that the verbal bullying 'resembled' physical violence. Most did not pitch their answer at this level, mentioning the fact that she is evil and that the bullying is constant and repetitive but failing to mention the most important aspect: the sound effect. Alliteration is all about the use of letters which evoke the sound patterns and which consequently play upon our senses.
- 5 Question 5 was answered correctly by around 60% of the candidates, with around 35% being awarded the full marks assigned to the question. The better candidates associated the bully's laughter with ridicule and humiliation and even included words like 'paradox', 'contrast' or any other synonym. In general, the candidates who were awarded full marks wrote about the emotional pain which the bully's laughter caused the victim. Some associated the word '*slices*' in line 7 with the word '*scalpels*' in line 3. The candidates who answered incorrectly generally stated that the laughter in question was a forced, artificial laughter (divided into individual pants - hence '*slices*' [in this interpretation a noun substantive, *not* a verb]).
- 6 Very few candidates were awarded three marks in this question. The majority played with the term pity and sympathy, and that the reader can see what the victim has to go through. Few actually mentioned the list aspect. A lot of candidates moved in the following direction: the use of short phrases indicates suspense and fear without offering any further explanation. Some mentioned that the short phrases show the silence in the canteen. These kinds of answers could not be accepted. A range of 1 to 2 marks were awarded according to expression and content in general, and most Paper B candidates did not exceed the one mark. The reason is that their answers were too vague. Again the difficulty of explaining the possible effect of a literary aspect of the text exposes the candidates' limitations.
- 7 Paper A candidates did extremely well in this question. Practically all of them scored the full marks as they understood the concept of emotional *vs* physical bullying and what the poets' message is. The answers were crisply relevant and well explained. Only a small number provided that incomplete answer, in which the point is not driven home. The Paper B candidates also managed a number of correct answers. Sadly enough, some B candidates did not attempt this question and others failed to understand the message completely. In fact, they wrote the opposite – *the bullied persona was hurt emotionally and all will heal by time; the persona was beaten up and there are wounds but these will*

heal by time; the persona was wearing high heels and these hurt. Needless to say, such answers (or lack of them) cannot possibly be awarded any marks.

- 8 Question 8 was answered with varying degrees of success, even in the case of Option A students. The question required candidates to focus on the medical imagery which features in the text and to assess its effectiveness. Some of the poorer candidates failed to engage with the question altogether, producing a paragraph which made no mention of medical imagery. Candidates who were awarded between 0 and 3 marks in this task appear not to have noticed that imagery from the world of medicine is ubiquitous in the text. They chose a single example of medical imagery – normally ‘scalpels’ or ‘saline’, since a definition of these terms was provided by the examiner – and wrote about that one only (these paragraphs, of course, were generally characterised by a fair amount of waffle – there is only so much one can say about a single image after all). Other candidates in the 0-3 bracket did not produce a paragraph at all, merely listing two or three quotations from the text, with each quotation being followed by a ‘definition’. Candidates who were awarded between 4 and 6 marks in this task showed an awareness of the fact that medical imagery is the largest image group in the poem. Their paragraphs were coherently-structured, referred to several examples of medical imagery in the text and assessed the importance of two or more of them. Several included relevant quotations from the poem.

SECTION B

Specific Comments

- 1 Most candidates of both options answered this correctly.
- 2 Many students gave the correct answer: ‘*self-confident*’. Many of these pointed out that the dog is an extrovert as he speaks proudly about the fact that he is a dog. He does not mind speaking about himself so openly and states that being a dog is nothing less than being human; it is simply different. Other students insisted that the dog is humble because he speaks honestly about himself. Still, in their answers they somehow missed how the dog is never apologetic about who he is and what he does. He speaks in an open but forceful way and does not expect the readers’ approval at any time. Certain answers were contradictory, for example suggesting that the dog is: ‘*humble because he says what he thinks and he doesn’t care what people say*’. Some students just chose an answer but then did not give a proper justification for their choice.
- 3 While a number of candidates managed to highlight that the short sentences and the use of full-stops do give a feeling of shock and abruptness, the greater majority of candidates did find this question rather taxing, giving vague answers or answers such as ‘*These words represent three actions.*’
- 4 This was another question requiring candidates to speak about the effect of the repetition of the word ‘*knew*’. The majority of the B candidates left this out. The most frequent answer of the A candidates was ‘*that the dog knew something that the person did not*’. Some even said that the dog had bad English. Very few candidates deserved full marks.

- 5 Many candidates missed the humour in this moment. They pointed out the logical fact that since the dog does not really talk, the person is only hearing barking and wants to stop him so as not to scare off the beautiful girl. Just a handful of candidates saw the humour in the way these words are repeated and the fact that the human shouts '*STOP BARKING*' every time the dog 'speaks'.
- 6 A number of candidates were able to choose two appropriate quotes but others:
- disregarded the line numbers indicated in the question and chose quotes from other parts of the passage;
 - opted to quote phrases like '*blowing right through her*' – which is not exactly negative, '*he looks very fierce*' – which is irrelevant, '*come away – come away*' – which is not a negative or positive view and '*blindly trusted his eyes*' – which is not connected to the question.
- 7 (a) The majority named the correct literary device, although there were a few 'surprising' answers.
(b) What proved to be most candidates' Waterloo was this part of the question as very few saw the 'artistic' character of the dog and most paraphrased, beat about the bush or came up with unacceptable connotations.
- 8 While few candidates gave exceptional answers, many were able to write a good solid paragraph indicating what they found funny in the story and also backing up their points with relevant quotes from the passage. Some candidates merely pasted quotes together and left it at that. Others found one or two points and referred to them repeatedly. Incidentally, some candidates were able to point out the pun in the title '*A Grave Mistake*' which indicated that they were in touch with the passage. One candidate actually asked 'Is this a funny passage?'

PAPER IIA

Specific Comments

DRAMA

- 1 (a) Quite a few chose this. Many candidates could indicate the circumstances in which the words were spoken. Some failed to say that Macbeth was preparing for the final battle and some others gave a detailed summary of the whole play.
(b) Answers to this were a mixed bag. The question required candidates to trace the deterioration of Macbeth's character from a noble person loved and respected by everyone to a tyrant hated by all. However, many candidates focused solely on the change in the relationship between Macbeth and his wife. Many answers also lacked reference to the text.
- 2 This was the most popular choice. Candidates were expected to focus on both the ambition and the consequences. It is a real pity that many candidates who obviously had a very good knowledge and understanding of the play lost marks because they focused only on ambition. A good number of candidates essentially presented a paraphrase of the events up to the point Duncan is murdered. Some candidates did indicate a couple of consequences but few highlighted unambiguously things like the disturbance in nature, the breakdown of political order, the distancing between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, the turn of the wheel where wrong seems to gain dominance, etc..

- 3 The most popular choices of symbols were: blood, darkness and light, and the weather. Candidates were able to give examples of the symbols in the play though they did not always clearly indicate their significance and often limited their writing to summarising instances from the play. The better candidates contrasted the significance of blood at the beginning of the play with its significance after the murder.
- 4 (a) Candidates were able to identify the circumstances and that Antonio is mistaking Viola in disguise for Sebastian.
(b) Here again candidates were able to come up with a list of the ways in which Antonio showed himself to be a true friend to Sebastian.
(c) Answers to this were also good with most of them able to show the complications arising from disguise.
- 5 Answers to this question were not particularly good. In spite of the fact that the candidates seemed to have understood the play well, most failed to underline clearly how the female characters outsmart the males. Some wrote about Sir Toby and Sir Andrew Aguecheek and others about Feste and the Duke and did not refer to the female characters.
- 6 Very few candidates opted to answer this question and most were not pitched to the desired level for Option A. Answers did not refer to Feste's observant nature and his wit which led Viola to pass this remark about him.
- 7 Not too many candidates chose this question; however, the candidates that did seemed to be well prepared as a good number of responses were well focused and written in an organised manner. Some candidates actually elevated the role of the radio to the level of nearly personifying it.
- 8 The candidates who answered this question seemed to have had no difficulty referring to '*some of the negative effects of war*'. The question was not particularly demanding and the responses were generally valid. What the responses lacked (but this was not particularly damaging) was the feel of 'universality' the answer expected – i.e. most candidates spoke about aspects of war as they are presented in the drama expecting the reader to extrapolate from their response the universality of the idea.
- 9 This was the most popular question on *The Long And The Short And The Tall*. The candidates seemed to have had no difficulty in focusing on two characters and writing about them. Most of the responses to this question were very valid demonstrating good knowledge of the text and the characters in particular.
- 10 Quite a few chose this. Some answers were good but some failed to show Amanda's overbearing nature and its effect on Laura.
- 11 Candidates were expected to analyse Tom's opening speech and discuss its importance in establishing the main themes of the play. Answers focused mostly on the theme of escapism.
- 12 This was the most popular choice of the three. Answers were generally good showing the influence of the father's absence on Amanda, Tom and Laura.
- 13 Quite a good number of candidates attempted this question. The weaker responses were limited to the quarry incident when the words are spoken. Other answers that drew on

other occurrences were also limited in that the candidates concerned themselves with how Miranda attempts to help Jim. The few good answers understood the broader implication of the quote in the title and explored the different forms of help Jim receives throughout the play.

- 14 The question focused on the opening and closing scene in *Mariza's Story*. In essence the response should have been concerned with Mariza's separation from and reuniting with her mother. Strangely, a good number of candidates attempting this question failed to understand this and wrote unbalanced responses focusing on one scene or the other rather than the contrast between the two. Also, many of those who did attempt to write about the contrast were not really sensitive to what happens in the two scenes and only dealt with the instances in the most superficial manner.
- 15 Some candidates gave the impression that they did not have a clear idea of what tension is and consequently did not indicate how tension is created. However, there were good answers that clearly indicated the tension and the final resolution.

POETRY

- 1 This was by far the most popular title for Option A students this year. Evidently, Spender's and Owen's poems appeal greatly to candidates, dealing as they do with real-life events involving young people. Most essays showed an acceptable knowledge, on the candidates' part, of both poems. Regrettably, (and rather unexpectedly) when discussing Owen's poem, some candidates omitted to mention, or gave insufficient importance to, the key episode of the soldier who died from exposure to poison gas. This episode is essential to the poet's expression of helplessness in this poem.
- 2 This proved the least popular of this year's Option A titles but it nonetheless gave rise to a handful of good answers. One of the recurrent errors was the candidates' tendency to get bogged down in biographical detail concerning Rupert Brooke (chief among them the legendary mosquito bite). This notwithstanding, there were some very good paragraphs on 'The Soldier' which at once attested to the candidates' awareness of the poem's message and to their familiarity with its imagery. With regard to 'Sonnet LX', candidates generally began by identifying its subject - the passage of time. Some went on - with varying degrees of sensitivity - to analyse the imagery through which the poem's message is expressed.
- 3 Candidates opting for Question 3 frequently tended – as has been the case in previous years - to fall into the biographical trap when writing about Hughes' 'Wind'. They gave far more importance to biographical information than they should have with the result that the poem was dealt with only superficially. With regard to the poem 'The Sea', on the other hand, two major problems emerged. The first was the fact that a number of candidates mentioned the extended metaphor comparing the sea to a dog well into their paragraph on the poem when this point ought to have been made at the beginning. Another common mistake was the candidates' repeated reference to the dog as a 'hungry dog' throughout their essays when, in actual fact, the dog is described as being hungry only in the opening line of the poem. The dog is definitely not hungry in the *third* stanza!
- 4 This was the most popular of the questions on *The Calling of Kindred*. It seems that the question fitted comfortably with the kind of notes students might be given on the poem. The candidates attempting this question seem to have had little difficulty to show how *The Charge of the Light Brigade* attempts to glorify war.

- 5 Very few candidates attempted this question. The responses were average at best. A couple were rather poor. It seems that candidates attempting this question knew the poems but found it difficult to write about the way the poets attempt to express the notion of the passage of time. References were generic and the responses were quite sketchy.
- 6 This question was also chosen by only a few candidates. The points made regarding question 5 above are equally applicable in this case. The candidates attempting this question demonstrated an adequate knowledge of the poems but did not find achieving the task set by the essay title easy to write properly about. The responses were average at best rarely going beyond a generic paraphrase.

PROSE

- 1 The candidates who chose this answer were able to address both parts of this essay. They discussed how the time travel element in this story makes it a fantasy, but then the solid historical references give the novel a realistic aspect too. Candidates referred to the descriptions of streets and houses, bear-baiting, the history of the Globe theatre as relevant examples of historical facts. The candidates who answered this question were able to rise above the narrative trap and focus on the examples which were relevant to the question.
- 2 This question was chosen more than the previous one. Good references included the contrast between Puck's free spirit and Nat's own heavy spirit after the death of his parents; the contrast between Nat and Eric, who Nat describes as 'a hundred years younger than me' and the close connection between Nat and Shakespeare (father/son relationship) based on the fact that they had lost someone important for them in their lives. Most essays managed to go beyond mere narration, and students were able to give valid arguments backed with solid and appropriate references from the novel.
- 3 This was the more popular question. The essays were not very impressive. In fact, a number of candidates failed to perform beyond average. The contrast between idleness and hard work was not analysed adequately. Paper 2A candidates are expected to be more analytical and mention the basic differences between the Eloi and the Morlocks as seen in the novel. Too few candidates managed to mention the TT himself in stark contrast to the other peers who just watch and listen to him.
- 4 This question was less popular but the candidates who did attempt it generally performed acceptably well. The content was valid because they mentioned the TT characteristics which stand him out of the crowd. The responses achieved the attempted task demonstrating a good knowledge of the novel.
- 5 Several candidates chose appropriate stories like '*Mrs Bixby and the Colonel's Coat*', '*Parson's Pleasure*' and '*Man from the South*' among others. One could not quite understand how '*Royal Jelly*' and '*The Landlady*' were chosen by certain candidates since, being spoilt for choice in the collection of stories, they could have opted for more relevant stories than these two. One is led to think that candidates prepare a number of stories in detail and regardless of the essay title they churn out that material. Moreover, there was a tendency to choose the same two stories: '*Taste*' and '*The Butler*'. Of course, candidates were not penalised for this since they were adequate examples but there was a definite lack of attempt at being unique in their essay writing.

- 6 Some of the essays just turned into mere summaries of both stories and did not focus on those particular elements that Dahl uses to show how our impressions of people can be misleading: *'The Landlady'* – for example, the sweetness of the Landlady, the fact that she was an elderly woman, the pleasantness of the guest house's environment. *'The Umbrella Man'* – for instance, the fact that the man was a smart looking elderly gentleman, the mother being aware of how appearances can be misleading, but still was fooled. Both stories –for example, how characters sweet talk people, how they look, how they welcome the people. A number of candidates opted to contrast the two stories in each paragraph and somehow this approach helped candidates to focus their work better.
- 7 Candidates who chose this answer, many times, focused on the pigs becoming human-like, which was more relevant to question 8. This was acceptable just as long as it was not the only point that the candidates used throughout the whole essay. Some candidates chose to give irrelevant information like indicating who the animals represented in the allegorical story without making this information relevant to the essay title. A very positive point in some of the better responses to this question was the specific referencing that supported any valid point the candidates were making.
- 8 In general, this question was well discussed. Napoleon was discussed at length and well, and his behaviour was analysed in relation to the human world. The candidates did well and performed above average. Some missed the opportunity and could only offer a very limited answer. The reason behind this is that they focused on the narrative aspect and ignored the question which specifically asked for aspects in Napoleon's lifestyle which come to resemble those of humans. The better candidates were confident and gave very good answers. Some essays were finely tuned and deserved a strong assessment.
- 9 Not attempted.
- 10 Only two candidates attempted this question.
- 11 As usual, many candidates simply narrated what happened within the story but were unable to show how, by describing this experience through the eyes of children, the author could show the plight of the refugees better. These are some of the ideas that could have been included but were generally missing: the fact that they are more vulnerable because they are children; as children they need adult guidance which they lacked: as children they cannot understand the discrimination that they face because they are unaware of certain political undercurrents that an adult might be more aware of; the absence of a mama and papa and the challenge on childhood games and dreams; etc.. Children also observe certain elements that adults do not. These were not picked upon by the majority of candidates who did not make the contrast between an adult and a child refugee and this was one of the main faults in many essays.
- 12 Candidates who chose this answer were able to write better essays than those who answered the previous question. The title allowed students the 'luxury' to narrate a bit and therefore they could do better, because candidates seem to be good at summarising. They were able to point out that telling the truth is not always the best policy. On the other side of the truth there is death, imprisonment, discrimination, lies and pain. Good quotes were used and very good references given from the book.

PAPER IIB

Specific Comments

DRAMA

- 1 This was a popular choice. Answers were a very mixed bag. Some candidates were able to mention some differences mostly between Duncan and Macbeth though Malcolm was more often than not ignored. No candidate referred to the Divine Right of Kings and that Macbeth was a usurper. One would have expected a reference to Macbeth's opinion of Duncan and what he says about the people's reaction to his death but sadly this was lacking. Also lacking was a reference to the scene in England between Malcolm and Mac Duff. On the whole, the answers lacked a reference to the text.
- 2 Some candidates had a very good knowledge of the role of the witches in the play. The question expected candidates to refer to the appearance of the witches at the beginning of the play, to Macbeth's decision to visit them later on in the play, the apparitions they showed him and their significance. The apparitions were not always referred to and therefore not even their importance.
- 3 Some answers were too general. Others spoke about Macbeth's ambition but did not refer to Lady Macbeth's ambition and the part she played in helping her husband to fulfil his ambition. Yet others did not refer to the witches' role in triggering Macbeth's latent ambition. Most were limited to a paraphrase tracing Macbeth's actions from the beginning of the play to the killing of Duncan.
- 4 Few chose this. Answers were superficial. Candidates were expected to show the similarities and differences between the two servants but candidates have little idea of how to answer this type of question. Answers also failed to show the master/ servant relationship.
- 5 Only a couple of candidates attempted this question. It is doubtful whether these candidates fully understood the question as the responses were below the desired level. As a minimum, the question expected reference to the selected character's way of behaviour at the beginning, reference to an event/events that occurred and how this/these made the character wiser. This logical development was not present.
- 6 Few chose this but generally candidates were clear about the mistakes and the reasons behind them.
- 7 Very few candidates attempted this question. Unfortunately, most of these limited their answer to the POW. Some did understand the question properly and offered valid responses. This question was not particularly demanding, yet for some reason, was not popular or not answered as well as one would have expected.
- 8 Of the few who answered this, the majority had no idea of realism. There were only three good answers that were analytical and referred to the feelings of the patrol, the real war, fear of death, family separation and the psychological effects of war.

- 9 Few answered this. The most popular characters were Macleish, Johnstone, Mitchem and Bamforth. There were a couple of good answers on Macleish and Johnstone. Some answers showed a very limited knowledge of the play. Others were sketchy on Johnstone, Bamforth's cynicism was not referred to and in other cases the answer was limited to Mitchem's and Bamforth's attitude to the POW.
- 10 Candidates were able to discuss why we can sympathise with Amanda but mostly did not discuss why we find her irritating.
- 11 Answers tended to be superficial with no reference to why Laura is the way she is or the significance of the breaking of the unicorn. Also the encounter between Laura and Jim lacked detail.
- 12 The answers to this question were the best responses given by candidates answering on this text. The answers were generally focused achieving the attempted task. The responses also included valid references to the text.
- 13 Most of the answers were valid. It should be said, however, that all the answers were better on Stubby than on any of the other two characters. In essence, the majority of the responses evidenced a clear imbalance in the writing between the focus on Stubby and on the other character.
- 14 Answers were mixed. Some were balanced and gave examples of both cruelty and kindness. Others wrote a general essay with no reference to the text at all. A couple of candidates wrote about '*Burning Everest*' when the question was specifically on '*Mariza's Story*'.
- 15 Some answers were a summary of the plots. Others indirectly gave examples of human behaviour without specifying the behaviour illustrated by the example. Candidates insist on summarising incidents, expecting the reader to understand the point they are making without them actually writing the point they are highlighting.

POETRY

- 1 Question 1 appears to have caused several students quite a lot of consternation, given the fact that, though they evidently had a good basic knowledge of the poems' content and imagery, they were not quite sure as to what *thought* underlay them. This dilemma produced a number of partially good answers which saw the candidates writing about the poems' subject matter and main themes with relative confidence only to flounder when it came to discussing the thoughts which each one expresses. It must also be said that Rossetti's poem poses problems of comprehension which the other poems do not. Candidates repeatedly referred to it as a 'conversation poem', generally stating that it consisted of a dialogue between the poet and God. They were, however, cryptic as to what the substance of the dialogue was, with many of them limiting themselves to saying that the dialogue was about 'the journey of life' or 'the journey to Heaven'.
- 2 Question 2 was generally answered well by those students who had at least some familiarity with the poems. The main problem with this question was that it was opted for by many students who had only the vaguest notion of what Squire's and Lucie-Smith's poems are about, which made for a rather poor set of essays overall.

- 3 With few exceptions, candidates' answers to Question 3 (perhaps predictably) gave proof of greater familiarity with Spender's poem rather than Hughes'. The paragraphs concerning Spender's poem were characterised by lengthy (and sometimes irrelevant) ruminations on the predicament of bullied and/or overprotected children. Option B answers which made detailed reference to Hughes' poem were few, with candidates generally limiting themselves to stating that the poem deals with a very windy night and referring sketchily to the better-known parts of the poem – the wind's bending a gull and flinging a smaller bird away and the poet's struggle to reach the coal-house.
- 4 Very few candidates attempted this question. The responses evidenced an 'acceptable' knowledge of the poem but the writing was generally very limited and the text definitely not better than average. Some answers were really short giving the impression that some candidates attempted this question with a vague understanding of the poem.
- 5 An even smaller number of candidates attempted this question. The answers were generally below the desired standard often with a barely acceptable write-up on one poem and a weak write-up on the other.
- 6 The candidates who attempted this question were expected to choose poems from *The Calling of Kindred*. Unfortunately, a good number of candidates attempting this question selected poems from *The Dragon Book of Verse*. These answers could not be considered as acceptable. The few candidates that limited their choice to the proper collection were generally acceptable but disappointingly never strong enough even to be awarded a strong assessment as Option B essays. This is unfortunate.

This year examiners had the disappointing experience of a number of Option B candidates stating in a note that they had not covered certain poems in the syllabus and thus could not give a complete answer to the question. Unfortunately, this seems to link with another phenomenon often observed by examiners in this examination. There are always instances where the Poetry section is left blank whereas the other sections are answered. It is extremely rare that examiners find instances when this is the other way around – i.e. where candidates answer the Poetry section and leave out the Drama or Prose section. One hopes that Poetry is being given the same emphasis as Drama and Prose as part preparation for this examination.

PROSE

- 1 Very few candidates chose this essay since candidates who chose to write about this novel tended to opt for question 2. Those who answered this question, mainly, went for the contrast between modern and Elizabethan London. This led to relevant, but many times repetitive, essays as they contained examples which revolved around the same point. Some also briefly contrasted the Nat in modern England with how he changed after having gone back in time.
- 2 This question seems to have offered a wider scope to the candidates. Through the narration of events, students could pinpoint the father/son relationship that sprang up between Nat and Shakespeare. Each character filled the other's void and helped in coming to terms with loss, which is one of the main themes in the novel. Essays written about this question were mainly relevant in that candidates were able to focus on salient references and incidents from the book. The stronger candidates used quotes intelligently rather than merely pasting them at intervals in the essay without any real connection with the on-going argument.

- 3 Very few candidates attempted this question. Generally speaking, none of the essays were particularly good and the responses ranged from average to below average. The candidates did not analyse the lifestyle of the Morlocks well enough. They concentrated on the narrative in general instead. A couple of candidates wrote disappointingly sketchy answers, well below the desired level even for Option B candidates.
- 4 Only a couple of candidates attempted this essay. The responses were decidedly below the expected standard, superficial and did not achieve the attempted task.
- 5 Unfortunately, many of these essays turned out to be summaries of the stories chosen. Many candidates just stated 'because it's funny' or 'because it is interesting' and did not go beyond that. Candidates do not give a favourite point or indicate an interesting twist in the story and then illustrate that with a reference to the text, but rather merely give a one-sentence introduction and a summary of the story. This led to very poor essays, even before one considers the actual writing of the essay. Some students do not even have an idea of paragraphing. Some candidates simply disregarded the "why" in the essay title and just gave summaries.
- 6 This question was clear and quite popular too. There were higher marks than in question 5. The candidates who failed did so because they focused on paraphrase (yet again) and offered very little of their own response. Very few discussed how characters like the umbrella man and Cyril Boggis try to cheat others. The well written essays which were valid, but quite unimpressive, were decent enough for Paper B. Some candidates trailed off and could not find suitable characters for discussion. Obviously, the plight of some candidates is compounded by the quality of their expression (fluency and accuracy) which further undermines the quality of the response - at times rendering it incomprehensible.
- 7 Many candidates opted for this question and some managed to provide well-structured and relevant essays. Some of the essays tended to become repetitive while others developed into a series of summarised episodes pasted together. Incidentally, it is important to note that many candidates give a number of variations in the spelling of characters' names (not only for this novel). The least a candidate can do is to spell names correctly. Others simply confused characters with each other, for example, Napoleon with Old Major.
- 8 A great number of candidates did well in this essay as it was easy both to structure and to write about; two separate paragraphs about two characters needed to be provided. Still, some candidates chose characters, for example, the cat, about which they could not possibly write at length as they are not prominent figures in the novel and not a lot of information is given about them. Moreover, choosing Snowball, Napoleon, and Old Major as one of these characters is just plain wrong.
- 9 There were only a couple of candidates who opted to choose this question. The essays were good, clearly explaining the two different types of suffering which included the young soldier being sent to war and the love affair between the protagonists which is derailed. Expression was good and the content valid.
- 10 Not attempted.
- 11 A valid attempt. The candidates, in their majority, showed knowledge of the novel and focused on the question although there was again a tendency to drift into narration. The importance of family was mentioned, especially the fact that Sade keeps playing her

mother's words of wisdom in her head and the fact that they want to reunite with father. Also, minor characters like Mama Appiah and the foster parents were included in the discussion.

- 12 As in question 8, candidates did well in this essay since both questions demand a simple structure and have a 'ready-made' focus in their titles. Some of the essays were very brief and many candidates confused Mama Appiah with Mama Buki, since in the book the former reminds Sade of the latter. The details about Mr. Morris were apt to be repetitive. Such questions lead one to think that students are not able to formulate and express their own personal opinions when it comes to creative writing but rather depend on what they learn by heart from class or other notes that they come across. Candidates are good at regurgitating details rather than discussing them.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners

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