

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01
Coursework

Key messages

- Teachers should refer to the 0408 Syllabus and Coursework Handbook during the planning stages of the course; information on the administration, presentation of the folders and teacher annotation is all to be found in these documents.
- Tasks for all assignments must be worded to enable candidates to fulfil the requirements of the level descriptors and be written clearly at the start of each assignment.
- Written assignments should include focused ticking and marginal annotation by the teacher which comment on strengths and weaknesses of candidate performance and should be clearly linked to the marking criteria. Where marks are changed during internal moderation there should be a comment justifying the change.
- Centres should check the accuracy of all administration rigorously before they submit their coursework folders and associated paperwork. This includes checking all marks are correctly transcribed from Candidate work to the Individual Candidate Record card, the Centre Assessment Summary Form and the MS1. Any marks changed during internal moderated mark should be the final mark recorded.

General comments

Centres will receive individual reports on their marking and internal moderation of candidate work. This general report draws together the main points contained within the centre reports and the observations in this report should be read alongside the individual report to the centre.

The Critical Response

Successful responses demonstrated clear critical engagement with the selected text in response to a well-formulated task. These responses analysed the ways writers achieve effects and were supported by well-selected and concise textual references. There were many perceptive and insightful responses seen, demonstrating knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the texts studied.

Weaker responses were narrative or explanatory in approach, lacking textual detail to support ideas and a response to the ways writers create effects. Candidates should be reminded that personal responses should be informed and supported by specific textual detail: merely asserting a point is unlikely to achieve high reward unless supported and developed.

For candidates to be able to meet the assessment criteria in their writing, suitable tasks must be set. Tasks beginning with command words such as 'Describe' or 'Explain' can have the effect of constraining candidates' performance. Some tasks set, dealing with one or two specific scenes rather than ranging across the whole play, were self-penalising as it is a requirement of the syllabus that knowledge of the whole text be demonstrated.

Examples of appropriately challenging tasks can be found in the 0408 *Coursework Handbook*.

The Empathic Response

The most successful responses focused on a specific character and moment in the text, offering a sustained and engagingly authentic 'voice' for the chosen character and their thoughts and feelings at the chosen moment; the full assignment was clearly written at the top of the response. These responses were firmly rooted in the text and written in first person.

Less successful responses did not focus on a precise moment with some relying on speculation rather than close detail to the text. Starting an empathic task in diary form, for example, 'Dear Diary', or as a letter, is not conducive to a successful response and is unlikely to result in an authentic voice for most characters. Direct quotation and imaginary conversations between characters should also be avoided. It is not a requirement of the empathic task that candidates attempt to write in Shakespearean or archaic language.

Tasks should be appropriately worded and not direct candidates towards a creative response by asking candidates to 'rewrite' a section of the text. Examples of successful and less successful empathic tasks are given in the *0408 Coursework Handbook*.

Teacher annotation

Candidate work is often devoid of any evidence that the work has been seen and marked. Teachers are reminded that all assignments should show evidence of having been marked to assist the moderation process. Focused ticking of salient points, supported by brief, marginal comments, closely linked to the level descriptors and a detailed summative comment, are a prerequisite for all written assignments. These annotations allow external moderators to understand how the final mark was awarded. It is unhelpful for teachers to just refer to the AOs, in the margin, as these need to be linked to the specific level and skills being rewarded.

Evidence of a rigorous internal moderation process is required in Centres which have more than one teaching group. Comments from the teachers involved in internal moderation should always be related to the marking criteria and should assist with the external moderation process. Marks changed during internal moderation should be written at the end of assignments and transferred to the Individual Candidate Record Card, showing clearly which is the final mark and total to be transferred to the Centre Assessment Summary Form and the MS1. All marks changed, during the internal moderation process, must be supported by a clear comment, linked to the level descriptors justifying the mark change.

Please note that candidate work annotated online should still include focused ticking and, when printed, responses should be A4 size to be legible, and not reduced to A5 due to the marginal annotation or printed to A3 to accommodate teacher annotation.

Administration

Centres are reminded of the importance of adhering to the deadline for the despatch of coursework samples to Cambridge. There is no requirement for Centres to send in the folders for all candidates entered. Instructions for selecting the sample are clearly explained in the syllabus and include the folders for the highest and lowest marks with the remaining folders selected from across the full range of marks. Candidate work should be sent to the moderator with the Individual Record Card fastened securely (e.g., by a treasury tag or staple) to the written assignments (and not placed in plastic wallets) to ensure ease of access. It is not a requirement that draft copies of assignments be included in folders nor that Individual Candidate Record Cards, for the whole cohort, be included. Assignments should be organised in the order presented on the Individual Record Card. A rigorous clerical check of the transfer of marks, at all stages of the process, should be in place to ensure all candidates are awarded the correct marks and grades.

Centres should not submit work they know contains plagiarism, including where they suspect the use of AI in the creation of the assignment. Teachers must be rigorous in their supervision of the stages of planning and writing of first drafts. This will enable them to vouch for the authenticity of candidate work. Moderators are required to send all cases of suspected malpractice to Cambridge's Compliance Department.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/21
Unseen Poetry

Key messages

- Candidates who are able to integrate comments on form and structure into their discussion are generally more successful when they link their remarks to the way in which these elements add to points made in response to the question.
- There is no automatic reward for identifying specific features such as simile, metaphor, juxtaposition, etc. Comments on these features work best when they are used to explore the way in which the writer is using these techniques for a particular effect.
- Candidates who can integrate references from the text, embedded within a sentence, suggest a greater focus on the quotation as an illustration of effects created. Those who copy out lengthy quotations followed by 'This shows ...' tend to lose sight of exactly how the reference demonstrates their point. Particularly unsuccessful are quotations with the 'middle' missing, replaced by ellipsis; candidates should be willing to directly quote the words they are commenting on.

General comments

Examiners noted that most candidates showed the ability to tackle an unseen poem with a degree of organisation and thoughtful insight. Many made a systematic exploration of the unseen text starting at the beginning of the poem and working their way through it. Some candidates started in the middle of the text which sometimes led to repetition of points and quotations. Conversely, a non-linear approach often helped the most able candidates to range more widely across the poem and to produce thoroughly conceived and impressive analysis.

Better responses started with sentences which directly addressed the terms of the question, rather than simply listing techniques used by the poet. Carefully referencing the question usually led to more focused essays with a better grasp of the poem. Some candidates concentrated solely on the language of the poem and did not address form or structure. Better responses integrated careful consideration of poetic form and structure, noting the effects of poetic features in relation to the question and to the construction of 'meaning' by the poet. Examiners felt that often the title of the poems was overlooked. However, those candidates who did make a pertinent reference to the title and linked it to the question often produced a more thoughtful, focused response.

Most candidates gave equal consideration to both parts of the question. There were very few uneven responses in terms of length and time management seemed to be handled well by most candidates who typically wrote about two sides for each essay.

More successful responses developed analysis that went beyond the literal and explored some deeper meanings – a key discriminator to access higher mark levels.

'We Have Everything We Need'

Question 1

(a) How does the poet vividly portray life in cities?

Several examiners remarked that this poem elicited some inconsistent responses, with quite a few candidates not understanding its 'overall message' – such as the irony implicit in the title.

There were strong responses, with more able candidates closely analysing the effects of form, structure and language – and highlighting poetic effects. Thoughtful analysis of structural features such as the repeated

opening and closing 'We have each become a small world/spinning from one collision to another' enabled candidates to identify the cyclical narrative and to consider its significance. They also distinguished between the nuanced meaning of the opening and closing of the poem, with the second iteration of the phrase shifting from city people being isolated and self-absorbed, to the poet implying polemically that we should collaborate, to 'make a global difference'.

Examiners noted that there were some interesting responses to 'we scrub cities off our skins' from the literal – cities are dirty – to the metaphor signifying a toxic environment. One candidate said that the metaphor was 'very powerful' because it is 'inclusive' ('we') and 'the use of the word 'scrub' can be considered as a violent action, or warning, [suggesting] toxic contamination. [...] The author is trying to inform her audience of the environmental impacts that living in a city may cause.'

There were many well-analysed references to listing and its cumulative creation of escalating tension, in addition to poor quality of life, cost of living and overwhelming climate change. Some candidates mentioned 'rent rises' and suggested that this meant that city dwellers could not afford to own their own property.

There was some excellent analysis of 'crammed into shoe boxes' and the lack of space in the city, and claustrophobic, flimsy accommodation. Examiners noted many references to 'hyperbole'. This linked well to comments about lack of privacy and the neighbours' 'shouts and moans'. Examiners noted that it was pleasing to see a high number of candidates mention the oxymoronic and alliterative 'lying lonely next to each other ...'. Here, enjambment was correctly identified, and several candidates stated that the enjambment was tactical. The point was made that the lack of end-stop changes the meaning of 'between', making the phrase an ironic commentary on our close, over-intimate proximity to strangers.

Technology and simulated nature were identified by more able candidates, with the silhouetted forest-scape and 'birdsong' showing that city people are so immersed in technology, they are no longer connected to real nature.

Very few mentioned 'compassion in 140 characters', perhaps because the cultural reference eluded the candidates (candidates are perhaps more likely to use other social media platforms over X (Twitter) and therefore not appreciate this aspect). Those that did mention this phrase were usefully able to identify its inference: that social media and a quick message of compassion about drought and fossil fuel extraction does not fix the problem.

Overall, weaker candidates often devoted too much focus on technical vocabulary at the expense of more detailed engagement with the poem's meaning and effects.

Examiners recorded examples of focused analysis, a few of which feature below:

'The poet vividly conveys city life as a repetitive monotonous cycle which is to the detriment of those living in it.'

'Everybody is lonely, yet everyone is aware of the existence of others.'

'City life is described, but there is a sense of it being warped.'

'We scrub cities off our skins' highlights the huge impact cities have on our health and how pollution is so deeply engrained into our skin.'

'Paper thin walls' creates an effect that there is a barrier, but it is so thin it is almost see-through. This gives the impression of never actually being quite alone. You are a spectator to the lives of others, but never part of it.'

'She sounds like a redhead' is mentioned to suggest that even though we may know our neighbours superficially, we don't really know what they are actually like. 'I think' suggests that even though someone is a neighbour we are so wrapped up in our own world we don't even notice their physical attributes.'

'What new constellation of stars guides us home?' This compares man-made objects to nature. The bright lights could be mistaken for stars at night which detracts from their natural beauty and further emphasizes the theme of artificiality.'

(b) How does the poet strikingly convey her fears for the future?

Examiners noted that some responses focused on the poet's fear of the future, without referencing the message: to wake up and take notice. There was also a sizeable number of candidates who failed to identify the environmental issues associated with the repetition of 'rises'. More able candidates did note the speaker's fear of climate change ('*heat rises, sea rises*'; '*cities exhale*') and commented on social isolation and the way in which city life was making us more dependent on technology and separating us from direct experience of the natural world. Only a minority of candidates picked up on the significance of '*happening elsewhere*', and its message: '*if we can't see it, we don't have to believe it*'.

Weaker responses tended to focus on the poet's fear and uncertainty about the future, without being able to explain what the poet's fears and uncertainties were. However, many of the responses were competent and showed overall understanding of the poem. There was understanding of the busy world which was being explored and how people living in cities were isolated despite living in close proximity to each other. Most candidates were able to identify negative aspects of the poem.

Some candidates lost focus on the text and wrote about their views on cities in general and how 'the government' controls things. The references to 'Damp rises, rent rises, high rises' generated many political views and some of the best responses did explore the polemical elements of the poem in cogent detail.

The reference to the 'birdsong' caused some confusion, although there were some interesting interpretations – including that people are so obsessed with their phones that this is the only way they actually experience nature or that the ring tone was like birdsong, or that it was like the joy of birdsong when their phones rang.

One candidate noted that, '*How will we sleep when we cannot turn our alarm clocks off?*' This rhetorical question highlights the fear the poet has for the future: she is scared something might control us as normally you have the choice as to whether or not you turn your alarm off.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/22
Unseen Poetry

Key messages

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- Candidates who can integrate references from the text, embedded within a sentence, suggest a greater focus on the quotation as an illustration of effects created. Those who copy out lengthy quotations followed by 'This shows ...' tend to lose sight of exactly how the reference demonstrates their point. Particularly unsuccessful are quotations with the 'middle' missing, replaced by ellipsis; candidates should be willing to directly quote the words they are commenting on.

General comments

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Better responses started with sentences which directly addressed the terms of the question, rather than simply listing techniques used by the poet. Carefully referencing the question usually led to more focused essays with a better grasp of the poem. Some candidates concentrated solely on the language of the poem and did not address form or structure. Better responses integrated careful consideration of poetic form and structure, noting the effects of poetic features in relation to the question and to the construction of 'meaning' by the poet. Examiners felt that often the title of the poems was overlooked. However, those candidates who did make a pertinent reference to the title and linked it to the question often produced a more thoughtful, focused response.

Most candidates gave equal consideration to both parts of the question. There were very few uneven responses in terms of length and time management seemed to be handled well by most candidates who typically wrote about two sides for each essay.

More successful responses developed analysis that went beyond the literal and explored some deeper meanings – a key discriminator to access higher mark levels.

'The River's Story'

Question 1

(a) How does the poet vividly describe the river in the past in lines 1-14?

Examiners noted that the choice of poem aroused strong emotions in many candidates, with the majority recognising that 'The River's Story' was a moving narrative about the tragic decline of a once-happy river because of human encroachment. The two questions generated empathetic responses, which led to interesting and enjoyable responses.

The best responses recognised that the poem was elegiac and a 'a dramatic monologue' and identified the use of personification as a device to create sympathy for a river, made terminally ill by humans. There were frequent references to free verse, and the poem's shape representing the 'flow' of the river. Some less-secure responses made weak and inaccurate comments about enjambment, caesura and, at times, used excessive terminology that failed to link it to a meaningful point, for example, 'The alliteration of the c sound represents maturity.'

Weaker responses failed to identify that the river was personified. There were also a minority of insufficiently developed responses, with candidates failing to explore much of the visual and auditory imagery. Some candidates ignored the opening lines of the poem. Some analysis was limited by skimming over the poet's use of specific verbs, such as '[s]hilly-shallied' 'laughed and gurgled'. However, examiners also noted that there were many candidates who scored highly in this regard and understood the use of child-like verbs use at the beginning of the poem.

Higher-level attainment was characterised by the addressing all four Assessment Objectives with flair and fluency. The writing conveyed empathy, while also sustaining focus on poetic effects and analysis of form, style and language. For example, using phrasing such as '*wistful lament*' or '*the way the river describes itself is reminiscent of a small, naïve child playing and enjoying itself with no knowledge of the more unsavoury aspects of life.*' Candidates who wrote at a higher level also commented on the onomatopoeic use of language, in addition to recognising that the eco-perfect world of the young river was written in the past tense and idealised.

There were also references to the poem being like a fairytale, with a nasty ending. The fairytale analogy was occasionally commented on when discussing the river's 'kingdom' with its rich insect and aquatic life. Each 'character' having its own role (ballerina, secret agent, soldier fish). Here, several candidates mentioned the poet's use of humour and whimsy.

Some candidates did not understand the narrative perspective, and this inevitably affected the perceptiveness of their response. Examiners felt that this represented a strong case for reminding candidates to read the title of the poem and to consider its significance with care.

Some candidates thought that it was the poet who was enjoying being in the river which led to some less-secure statements, especially about the creatures living in that environment.

(b) In what ways does the poet powerfully convey the changes to the river in lines 15-34?

Examiners noted that there were many effective responses to this question which explored the vivid and distressing imagery to telling effect.

Several higher-level candidates offered excellent analysis, but 'missed' chunks of the narrative including its message, such as the address to the children of the future in the second part of the poem. Many did not pick up on some of the more obscure references, such as the 'burning stars'. Those that did identified the stars as 'still' burning because they are beyond our (humanity's) reach. Several candidates stated that the stars were 'burning' with anger because of human desecration of the river, and Nature (hence 'vagrant bluebells, Dwarfed by those same poisons'). There was reference to 'contrast', with comparisons such as 'utopian' to 'dystopian;' 'magical' to 'hellish.'

Several candidates used phrases linked to the personified river, such as 'arterial flow,' and the use of the verb 'clogged' denoting a blockage (heart/bowels). It was good to see candidates effectively identifying and analysing the use (and purpose) of sibilance, alliteration, similes and metaphors. More able candidates identified the volta ('sweet time/a gone time') and the effect of the harsh rhyme 'junk/shrunk.' However, many candidates identified the rhyme but didn't go on to develop their analysis that much more. One response which did said: '*The poet suddenly uses a rhyming couplet rhyming 'junk' with 'shrunk' presenting how the river is now stuck as an 'open sewer'. This portrays the lack of freedom which has been stripped from the river. The rhyme helps to create this trapped feeling of the river as though it's forced to stay within the rhyme scheme.*'

There was widespread misunderstanding of 'like drunken giants' with candidates not realising that it is referring to the factories; some thought it was actual people vomiting into the river. Some candidates lost focus on the question and wrote extensively about pollution and how we should be taking better care of the planet. The 'still burning stars' was open to many different interpretations. One favoured interpretation was

that the stars had not yet been polluted and they maintained their natural beauty even though the river did not, hence they were still burning bright.

Examiners noted a few striking excerpts, listed below:

'The river's story is like its lifetime story.'

'The poet describes the river's glorious past and its deterioration at the hands of humans.'

'The tone is of a nostalgic reminiscence.'

'The present tense is powerfully highlighted by the single word 'tonight'. This shift portrays the incoming demise of the river. 'Tonight' may be the river's last night.'

'The River's Story' reminds us that we have destroyed something of natural beauty which has existed for many years and which was meant to be left alone.'

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/23
Unseen Poetry

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Most candidates gave equal consideration to both parts of the question. There were very few uneven responses in terms of length and time management seemed to be handled well by most candidates who typically wrote about two sides for each essay.

More successful responses developed analysis that went beyond the literal and explored some deeper meanings – a key discriminator to access higher mark levels.

'When I came from Nepal'

Question 1

(a) How does the poet movingly portray his feelings about leaving his country in lines 1-20?

The best responses linked poetic effects to detailed comments exploring the question. Very good essays noted the use of enjambement in the first stanza to convey a sense of being overwhelmed, followed by the jarring impact of a series of end-stopped lines intensifying the emotional experience of departure.

There was an opportunity that candidates might have commented on the series of shortening lines in the first stanza, where the typography of the poem offers a visual sense of diminishment. Good responses analysed the use of colour imagery, again to intensify the experience of departure, and there was frequent and helpful use of apt quotations. Tactile imagery in the opening stanza was explored to very good effect, linking high emotions to 'thick hot sweat built up / in the slits of my palms'. Most responses explored the intimacy of the first-person perspective to good effect.

The use of olfactory imagery in the second stanza ('I smell the iron rust') helped to intensify the poet's feelings and the best responses were alert to the shift in tense – from the past to the simple present, again for the purposes of intensifying the experience of departing.

More candidates might have explored the alliterative impact of 'the zest of sweet citrus/ fizzing' and developed analysis of intense sensory experience linked to the question, as well as exploring the significance of the single-word line 'fizzing' with its continuous tense hinting at lingering emotions, 'a kind of longing'.

(b) Explore how the poet creates striking impressions of living in an unfamiliar place in lines 21-38.

Many candidates explored the impact of the repetition of 'I did not know' linked to living in an unfamiliar place. Good responses were alert to colour imagery and contrasted the 'grey, gravel roads' with the more intimate sense of 'sweet citrus/fizzing' from earlier in the poem, suggesting the loss of an ideal, vivid life.

Better responses picked up on the imagery of alienation such as 'lonely red-bricked houses', 'gazing strangers' and 'silence in the streets'. The best responses developed the more insidious sense of 'slyness' ('sly gestures of restaurants') and there was thoughtful discussion about the disconcerting effects of personification in the last two stanzas.

The cyclical, enclosing sense of the repeated sentence 'I did not know' at the start of stanza 3 and the end of the poem was also remarked upon. Good responses developed the use of sibilance in relation to the question, exploring its 'almost threatening' effects.

Weaker work tended to be brief, and often mentioned techniques without exploring their effects in relation to the question. Less secure essays did not seem to appreciate that the text was a poem, and therefore tended to ignore elements of form and structure.

On the whole, though, many candidates developed a good understanding of the poem and its concerns, and wrote accurately and thoughtfully on the two very different questions.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/31
Set Text

Key messages

Successful responses:

- Show a detailed knowledge of texts
- Address the question explicitly
- Support their views with relevant textual reference
- Explore closely the ways in which writers achieve their effects
- Use much direct quotation in **Section B** answers to explore the detail of the writing.

Less successful responses:

- Have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- Narrate or describe aspects of texts rather than answer the question
- Make assertions which are not substantiated
- Merely log or explain writers' techniques
- Have an insufficient range of quotations to support views and explore aspects of the writing in **Section B** answers.

General comments

There was much evidence that candidates had enjoyed the texts they had studied. The most popular this session were *The Government Inspector*, followed by *Fever Dream*. There was also a significant number of responses to the poetry and *Anowa*, with a few on *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Fewer were seen on the short stories and in some cases, it appeared that candidates were sight reading the **Section A** extract or unfamiliar with that part of the text. More candidates opted to answer on two texts rather than choosing the same text for both sections. Centres should remind candidates to put the question number in the margin, rather than simply labelling their responses A and B.

Most candidates divided their time well across their two answers for this paper. A minority answered two questions from **Section A** and none from **Section B**, with some appearing unfamiliar with at least one of the extracts. The two most common problems arose from a lack of focus on the question set and a lack of detailed, specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions. Some of the least successful **Section B** answers restricted their range of reference to the extract printed with **Section A** questions, even where the **Section B** question instructed candidates **not** to do so **or** when the **Section A** extract was irrelevant to the question. Some candidates responding to **Question 9** on 'The Bonesetter's Daughter' mixed up Ruth, the focus of the question, with Luling, and used the extract from **Question 3** which is between Luling and Precious Auntie. Candidates need to be familiar with the layout and rubric of the paper before they sit the examination.

The strongest answers showed an impressive knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully incorporating concise quotations to support their ideas. For **Section A** questions, the most successful responses explored the detail of the extracts with considerable sensitivity, using much well-selected reference. For **Section B** questions, the most successful candidates were able to recall from the whole text an extensive range of quotation which they deployed effectively in their response to the question. In less successful responses across both sections of the paper, an absence of direct textual support led to writing that was overly dependent on assertion and explanation. The weakest responses to **Section A** questions tracked the content of the extract without selecting relevant material with which to address the question.

The most successful responses tailored their material to the key words in the question from start to finish: these answers engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as ‘memorably’, ‘strikingly’, ‘powerfully’, ‘vividly’, ‘amusingly’. There were, however, some responses that made only a limited attempt to address these key words. Again this session, in less successful responses candidates embarked on a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes with little regard to the question, often using a learned opening paragraph for **Section A** which was repeated in **Section B**. Not only does it not score any marks, it takes time that could be used for developing ideas relevant to the question. Candidates should be told that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward; they should tailor relevant material from their knowledge to address the specific demands of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates understood that the extract comes from the start of the novel, with Amanda and David talking to each other. They wrote about it being unsettling because Amanda is in pain and is frightened about Nina’s safety. Many felt that the relationship between Amanda and David is unsettling, especially because David – who is clearly a child – appears to have control over an adult. Stronger responses explored how the narrative structure operates, with the speakers retelling past events, using present tense, and connecting these events to Amanda being in hospital and separated from Nina. They discussed how Amanda wants to know what happened to Nina, whilst David is frustrated with her inability to remember events and has a different agenda. Some explored David and Amanda as unreliable narrators, however this led some candidates away from a direct focus on the extract. Less successful responses stated that it is unsettling because it is confusing, rather than grasping the deliberate ambiguity. Some of these said it was hard for the reader to be sure who is speaking and when, even though they mentioned the use of italics.

Less successful responses spent a lot of time explaining what may or may not have happened to the children, concentrating on their bleeding fingers and what has been done to them. These responses did not explore this extract in the light of their knowledge of the novel. They discussed it from the perspective of a reader who has only read this far. It would be helpful for candidates to be told that they need to show their understanding of how any extract, including from early on, fits into the context of the whole text.

The strongest responses adeptly contextualised the interaction between Amanda and David within the rural hospital setting, emphasising the ramifications of contamination on the protagonists and the broader community, notably highlighting Amanda’s urgent predicament and her concern for Nina. Several candidates entertained the notion that David could either be a product of Amanda’s imagination or an actual person, thereby questioning the reliability of the narrative. Recognising the deliberate ambiguity of the situation, these candidates grasped its intended effect of unsettling the reader.

Successful candidates delved into the diverse literary techniques employed by the author to heighten the scene’s unsettling nature, rather than superficial and generalised observations. These candidates meticulously examined the implications of the children’s ‘names, on the waiting room wall’ and pondered their fates; scrutinised the peculiar dialogue between Amanda and David; empathised with Amanda’s evident suffering; and analysed the significance of the ‘rescue distance.’ Some considered the unnerving, matter of fact way in which David refers to death and the feeling of being trapped in the hospital.

Conversely, less successful candidates either narrowly focused on the surface-level interpretation of Amanda and David’s dialogue or offered vague observations about the unsettling nature of the extract without substantiating their claims with reference to the extract.

Question 2

Most candidates effectively contextualised the extract from Phase 2 of the play ‘Anowa,’ focusing on the scene where Anowa and Kofi Ako journey along a highway, at the start of their marriage and scrutinising the tensions within their relationship. Successful responses centred on the nuanced characterisation of both protagonists. Candidates considered Anowa’s aspiration for independence, defying conventional gender roles and societal expectations imposed by her husband. They highlighted how she is stigmatised as having a ‘restless soul’ due to her infertility and condemned for her rejection of the dehumanising practice of ‘buying men,’ which contributes to marital discord.

Candidates also discussed Kofi Ako as exhibiting chauvinistic behaviour towards Anowa, questioning her desire to work with him on the 'highways' and they condemned him owning slaves. Some highlighted the buying of slaves as central to Kofi's eventual downfall. They analysed how stage directions enriched the audience's comprehension of the scene, such as Kofi Ako 'mimicking' Anowa, illustrating his perception of being treated condescendingly. Some candidates referred to the warning from Badua that the marriage would not succeed, even though Kofi has become much more successful than she believed. A few highlighted the buying of slaves as central to Kofi's downfall.

The most successful candidates responded to the language of the dialogue and the stage directions, tracking the use of 'alarmed' 'with surprise' and 'with surprise' as their argument develops. Most were able to make some commentary on the way Anowa's words and actions work together to express her horror at Kofi's suggestion about buying slaves, with the stage directions 'Getting up so slowly that every movement of her body corresponds to syllables or words in her next speech' reflected in the hyphens and capitals on 'MY'. They considered the impact of her enunciation and strident tone in contributing to the rising tension.

Strong responses also referred to the way ellipsis and repetition of 'eh' shows Kofi's initial reluctance to discuss slaves, knowing Anowa's views, and the increasingly assertive nature of their statements to each other.

Most candidates recognised the difference in Anowa and Kofi's values, some seeing how his more traditional views about women emerge in this extract. Less successful responses spent a lot of time talking more generally about attitudes to women in the play, simply explaining what Anowa and Kofi say to each other. When they used quotations, they stated these were powerful – a recognition of the wording of the question – but struggled to say how. They offered a more superficial analysis of the couple's relationship, neglecting to engage deeply with the playwright's use of dramatic techniques

The most insightful responses recognized the playwright's strategic use of dramatic devices to explain Anowa and Kofi Ako's reactions to contentious issues within their marriage. They further explored the symbolic roles both characters embody concerning gender roles and their defiance of Ghanaian cultural norms of that time.

Question 3

Most candidates adeptly contextualised the extract where Luling discloses her intention to marry into the family responsible for Precious Auntie's attempted suicide. They recognised the writer's use of dramatic irony to underscore how Luling's immaturity causes significant relational harm between herself and Precious Auntie, stemming from deception and misunderstandings. The most proficient candidates critically assessed Tan's employment of various literary devices to depict these relational complexities, noting the barriers to effective communication arising from Precious Auntie's inability to speak and Luling's dismissive attitude towards someone with whom she has a close bond, considering her merely as a 'nursemaid.'

The strongest responses meticulously traced the development of the conflict between Luling and Precious Auntie, illuminating the reader's understanding of familial tensions and the consequences of miscommunication depicted in the extract. These candidates also reflected on the thematic significance of clear communication within families.

Less successful candidates superficially acknowledged aspects of the conflict, such as deceptions and misunderstandings between the characters, but failed to delve into the nuanced emotions, responses, and attitudes between characters.

Most candidates understood that the extract shows a turning point in the relationship between Luling and Precious Auntie, where for the first time LuLing lies to her and is cruel. Many referred to the shift in power dynamics and that Luling does not realise until much later that Precious Auntie is her birth mother and fails to see the depth of Precious Auntie's love. They discussed the theme of communication, with the power LuLing holds over Precious Auntie, quoting, 'when I refused to talk for her, she was left wordless, powerless.' The theme of secrecy was also explored by many candidates and they showed understanding of how the decision to hide the truth of LuLing's birth caused so much heartache here and elsewhere in the novel.

In some responses, this thematic exploration moved the candidate away from exploring the conflict within the extract itself.

The most successful responses explored the language with which Precious Auntie expresses her superstitious beliefs, directly to LuLing and in the letter. They explored the metaphor of a stone wall Tan uses

to convey how LuLing lies. They tracked the shift from the physical and verbal conflict to the impact on Precious Auntie of LuLing repeating the cruel words she has heard Mother and the aunts say. The strongest could see how Luling's understanding of Precious Auntie's response to her assertion is flawed. They analysed the use of first person narrative perspective, some commenting that they found Luling's detached, matter of fact language to be disturbing and expressed sympathy for Precious Auntie.

Less successful responses simply tracked what these characters say to each other, with limited understanding of what is happening at this stage in the novel. Some confused the letter with the manuscript written by Precious Auntie in which she reveals that she is Luling's mother.

Question 4

Most candidates were aware of the situational and dramatic irony at play throughout the scene, commenting on Khlestakov's entitled behaviour (considering he really has nothing) and the waiter's patience tinged with thinly veiled sarcasm and insolence. A few made the connection between the behaviour of the rich in Tsarist Russia and the more than patient behaviour of the Russian workers who had to put up with them. There was some effective analysis of language on this question comparing Khlestakov's over the top verbose abusive comments with the waiter's curt minimalist replies. Many could see that the waiter is acting on the instructions of the landlord, and often commented that he gains satisfaction by not giving in to Khlestakov's demands. Whilst less successful responses took literally Khlestakov's assertions about the soup being 'dishwater', the majority enjoyed the way he rejects the food, but – in desperation – continues to eat it. Strong responses analysed the stage directions which contradict his words, for example 'protecting the food with his hands', 'Eats' and 'Cuts chicken in soup'. Most referred to Khlestakov's spoilt and childish nature, many quoting the stage direction, 'Claps his hands and jigs up and down on his chair' and the excitement inherent in 'Hooray!'

Many candidates explored how the writer uses dialogue and stage directions to reveal the power dynamics between Khlestakov and the waiter. They saw how the waiter, of a lower status than Khlestakov (even before he fakes being a government inspector), refuses to be dominated by him, some stating that he must have a lot of experience in dealing with difficult customers who fail to pay their bills. Most responses mentioned Khlestakov's insults to the waiter, and how the matter-of-fact acceptance of these by the waiter enrages him further.

The most successful responses considered ways that Gogol uses the character of Khlestakov to critique aspects of Russian society such as decadent living and gluttony. They found humour in the contrast between his current penury – and the frustration it brings him – with his deluded beliefs that he is entitled to a high standard of cuisine. The strongest responses further explored the satirical dimensions of the play, particularly in how the playwright satirises gluttony through verbal irony, exemplified when Khlestakov disparages the waiter, who is merely fulfilling his duties. These responses demonstrated an understanding of how linguistic and dramatic devices serve to amuse the audience while critiquing the contemporary society.

Less successful responses tended to superficially trace the interactions between Khlestakov and waiter. They explained what each character says and does, often using quotations, but struggled to analyse the amusing nature of their dialogue. Some of these mistakenly believed Khlestakov to be poor, instead of having wasted the money given to him by his father. They provided a superficial commentary of the interaction between Khlestakov and the waiter, neglecting to show how dramatic and linguistic techniques are employed to evoke humour and convey social critique.

Question 5

Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the overarching theme of the poem, which revolves around relationships mirrored through seasonal transitions. The most proficient responses engaged in a detailed analysis of the poem, analysing how the poet employs a variety of poetic techniques to depict the shift from a personified winter clad in 'her snow-white robes' to the arrival of 'youthful spring.' These candidates adeptly juxtaposed the changing seasons with the speaker's love interest, who remains emotionally cold towards him.

The strongest responses conducted a comprehensive analysis of the entire poem, exhibiting perceptiveness in their exploration of Carew's use of poetic techniques to vividly portray the seasonal transformation. They particularly highlighted the effectiveness of imagery, such as the portrayal of the love-interest's emotional state in the closing line, and the mythological allusions to figures like 'Amyntas' and 'Chloris.' Furthermore, these responses astutely examined how the poet contrasts the unchanging nature of the speaker's unreciprocated love with the changing seasons.

Many responses took a line-by-line approach to the poem, explaining what Carew is saying about the world coming alive as winter loses its grip. This linear approach was acceptable given the poem's structural shift from Winter to Spring. They commented on the change from Winter to Spring, noting the frost on the ground and the sound of the birds.

The strongest responses were characterised by insightful personal responses to the poem in addition to their analysis of the poet's use of language, structure and form. Successful candidates paid particular attention to the line 'June in her eyes, in her heart January', noting the chiasmic structure and symbolism used to convey the disinterest of the speaker's lover. Less successful responses tended to grasp only the surface meaning of the poem, omitting in-depth exploration of language, structure, and poetic form. These tended to misunderstand or miss out the references to this relationship in the poem, not seeing how this is part of Carew's presentation of the changing seasons.

There was often too much of the poet's background given in a lengthy introduction, followed by straightforward summary and/or paraphrase of the poem. In these answers, there was surface understanding of the text e.g. '*dead swallow*' was literally winter's cruelty rather than spring being a time of rebirth. Some attempts to explore single words or phrases were less successful when the context was not given. For example, '*benumbed earth*', '*To melt that marble ice*', '*heart congeal'd*' & '*Scalding*' were explained with no sense of the speaker's thoughts and feelings. In slightly stronger responses, there was a basic understanding that his 'lover' did not reciprocate his love and was cold, even though the weather was warm and nature was alive again.

In contrast, stronger responses offered a clear understanding of the symbolism of the end of winter and rebirth in spring and the contrast between the speaker's mood and his love interest. There was understanding of the personification of winter with '*Her snow-white robes*' and his joy in nature with '*the long'd for May*' and the despair that it did not bring a change in heart of his 'love'. There was critical understanding of form and structure, rhyme scheme and the use of punctuation to indicate a change in mood for example. '*Now all things smile: only my love does lower*'.

Many commented on 'the earth has lost/Her snow-white robe' not only in terms of it being an indication that Spring was close, but the personification of the earth as female linking to his lover. Stronger responses commented on the thawing of winter in terms of the relationship, citing references such as 'the warm sun thaws the benumber earth' and 'Nor hath the scalding noonday sun the power/to melt that marble ice'. Some considered this a representative of his frustration. There were also comments on the tender aspect of the 'cuckoo' and the 'bee'. Some of the strongest responses commented on the 'fireside' with the flames perhaps representing glimmers of hope in the relationship.

Less successful responses simply quoted specific words and phrases, and explained their meaning rather than analysed the writer's methods. They referred to the use of rhyming couplets, caesura and enjambment, making general comments on the way this showed the seasons flowing into each other, but without explicit explanation of how.

Question 6

There were too few responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates were familiar with the relationship between Amanda and Nina, focussing on the concept of the 'rescue distance' and the symbolism of the rope. They saw it as a close, loving mother-daughter relationship with some seeing Amanda as paranoid for Nina's safety and, as a result, over-protective and controlling. They referred to key moments in the novel, such as the visit to the supermarket, and how Amanda had taught Nina to be safe by automatically putting on her seat belt.

Many candidates compared this relationship between parent and child with that of Carla and David, some saying that Schweblin uses it as a foil. They explained how initially both relationships were warm and caring, giving examples such as Carla's desperate search for medical attention and fears during the transmigration and Amanda and Nina's playfulness together. They saw a contrast after David's transmigration, with Carla calling her son a 'monster' and seeing him as a threat to Nina's safety. In some less successful responses,

candidates spent too long focusing on Carla and David, possibly because they had more to write about this relationship.

Successful responses explored the less serious side of their relationship, for example the game in which they play at being lords and ladies, with Nina's use of the royal 'we.' This was used to contrast Amanda's increasing paranoia and fear when Nina is in the house with David. Most candidates understood how Amanda's priority when she is in the hospital is finding out what has happened to Nina and the pathos of the ending where it is clear that her husband does not see Nina's soul within David. They concluded that it is impossible for a parent to protect a child all the time, and that even something as simple as getting wet can have dangerous consequences, especially in a polluted world. Less successful responses saw the relationship more simply as a normal mother/daughter and failed to see the complexities.

Question 8

Most responses to this question focussed their discussion of the marriage between Badua and Osam on their relationship with Anowa and attitudes towards her marriage to Kofi. They used this to explore the extent to which Badua and Osam conformed to traditional values, referring to his unwillingness to get involved with the discussion about Anowa's husband. Some candidates were unclear as to whether he wanted her to become a priestess, but the majority saw Badua's belief that this would be better than her marrying Kofi as the catalyst for their disagreement and frustration with each other. Successful responses supported their ideas with textual evidence and used quotations from the dialogue and stage directions as the basis for some analysis of the language and structure. A quotation often used was Osam's 'It is a long time since I gave up trying to understand the human female' as evidence of the conflict between them, with some seeing him as deliberately antagonising his wife by not taking her concerns seriously.

Less successful responses either focussed more on Anowa and Kofi, with tenuous links to Badua and Osam, or wrote in a general, narrative way about their arguments with little reference to the text.

Question 9

Most candidates found Ruth to be an admirable character, with the majority focussing on her relationship with Luling and the way she cares for her as she develops dementia. They discussed the difficulties she experiences as a child and saw how Luling's skills as a mother were influenced by Precious Auntie, often referring to her regular threats of suicide. Some saw her as a people pleaser with some differing views as to whether this made her weak or caring.

A few responses confused Ruth with Luling and attempted to use the extract to answer the question. Where they did not mix up the characters, they predominantly discussed Luling and Precious Auntie, before linking back to the question through generational trauma. This meant that Ruth herself got very little attention. Some demonstrated an awareness of her quiet and timid nature and her traumatic childhood but were unable to articulate any admirable qualities.

Successful responses took a nuanced approach, often acknowledging Ruth's feelings of guilt towards her mother and desire to make amends. They considered her relationship with Art and his girls, admiring her perseverance, for example arranging the dinner for his extended family and trying to balance their needs with those of Luling. Many of these stronger answers admired Ruth for surviving a difficult, traumatic childhood with a 'neurotic', suicidal mother with whom she had frequent arguments. They saw Ruth's strength as she slowly made changes to her relationship with Art and his daughters; became a writer instead of a ghost writer and was able to build a relationship with Luling and take care of her as her dementia progressed.

Less successful responses made general comments about her kindness to her mother, sometimes mentioning specific incidents such as the way she moves in with her or abandons her holiday but lacked specific textual details. They talked in general terms about why it is important for a daughter to care for her mother. Some thought that Ruth was cruel for wanting to put her mother in a home, without acknowledging the strain on Ruth and her relationship with Art.

Question 10

This was the most popular of **Section B** responses and candidates embraced the opportunity to write about the corruption in the play, most referring to the Mayor, his wife and daughter, the Judge, Postmaster and Khlestakov. Morality, sometimes spelt mortality but fortunately not confused in terms of the meaning, was seen to be synonymous with Gogol's desire to expose the corruption in Russia. In some responses, this

contextual explanation dominated, rather than candidates exploring the ways in which such corruption is presented.

Most considered the play's opening and the ways in which the officials had obviously been abusing their power – the chapel and the 'recovering like flies' being particularly popular areas. The lack of concern for the people was also at the forefront of most answers. The attitude towards women and the loose morals of the Mayor's wife were also popular areas of exploration.

Successful responses used 'memorably' to consider the humorous ways in which Gogol presents bribery and the ways in which those in power seek to conceal their wrongdoings rather than do anything constructive about the state of the town. They referenced the ways the Mayor and the Judge use language such as 'little' about their sins, and how 'borzoi puppies' were seen to be an insignificant – and rather ridiculous- bribe. The strongest responses broadened their discussion of morality beyond bribes or fraud to include exploitation of the working class and a lack of respect for marriage vows. These candidates relished the way Khlestakov takes advantage of the town's officials, beating them at their own game, and the breaking of the fourth wall at the end of the play as the Mayor addresses the audience, criticising its wealthy members.

Less successful responses simply listed examples of the corrupt practices, sometimes being unclear as to which character was involved and were unable to use any direct textual references. They did not make enough of the play's judgemental conclusion with the comeuppance delivered particularly to Anna and Maria, along with the condemnation and didacticism of the line 'You are laughing about yourselves' illustrating how the progress of the play has been the holding up of a moral mirror.

Question 11

Most candidates readily engaged with the notion of 'fascinating' as a key word in the question; it was broadly interpreted as 'memorable' or 'surprising' or 'interesting'. They wrote about how the eels were described as creatures of mystery, somehow connected with the past and somehow distant and powerful. Better candidates engaged to some degree with the language and its implications, commenting for example on how they are personified as 'aloof' almost with a sense of majesty or disinterest in our world; or how their sound is 'untranslatable', with the significance of their sounds remaining unknown and mysterious; or how the direct address of 'you keep looking and looking' draws the reader into the sense of an unending sense of lack of understanding, symbolic perhaps of humanity's absolute ignorance.

Strong responses explored the imagery, such as the comparison with plumbing systems, and her use of the second person to engage the reader in the search. They drew on an impressive range of textual reference, including direct quotation, to support their analysis of the writer's use of language, form and structure.

Less developed responses focussed on Oswald finding the eels 'fascinating' because she found them hard to see as a result of the speed with which they move. As a result, they concluded that this meant she wanted to understand more about them. They talked in general terms about the structure and rhyme scheme, seeing it as reflecting the swift movement of the eels, but being unable to say how. They mentioned how Oswald is frustrated at not seeing them clearly and tended to repeat the same points. In some cases, there was simply a summary of the poem and very few textual references. A minority simply felt that the writer showed how disgusting and frightening she finds eels to be.

Some responses seemed to put too much emphasis on a personal response, discussing their own feelings about seeing nature or the need to protect it, rather than rooting their discussion in the text itself.

Question 12

There were too few responses to this question to make useful comment.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/32
Set Text

Key messages

Successful responses:

- Show a detailed knowledge of texts.
- Address the question explicitly.
- Support their views with relevant textual reference.
- Explore closely the ways in which writers achieve their effects.
- Use much direct quotation in **Section B** answers to explore the detail of the writing.

Less successful responses:

- Have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts.
- Narrate or describe aspects of texts rather than answer the question.
- Make assertions which are not substantiated.
- Merely log or explain writers' techniques.
- Have an insufficient range of quotations to support views and explore aspects of the writing in **Section B** answers.

General comments

There was much evidence that candidates had enjoyed the texts they had studied. Although *The Government Inspector* and the poetry anthology were the most popular choices, there were responses to all the set texts. Centres need to remind candidates to put the question number in the margin, rather than simply labelling their responses A and B.

Most candidates divided their time well across their two answers for this paper. The two most common problems arose from a lack of focus on the question set and a lack of detailed, specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions. Some of the least successful **Section B** answers made significant reference to the extract printed with **Section A** questions, even where the **Section B** questions 7 and 10 instructed candidates **not** to use the extract printed in **Section A**. Candidates need to be familiar with the layout and rubric of the paper before they sit the examination.

The strongest answers showed an impressive knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully incorporating concise quotations to support their ideas. For **Section A** questions, the most successful responses explored the detail of the extracts with considerable sensitivity, using much well-selected reference. For **Section B** questions, the most successful candidates were able to recall from the whole text an extensive range of quotation which they deployed effectively in their response to the question. In less successful responses across both sections of the paper, an absence of direct textual support led to writing that was overly dependent on assertion and explanation. The weakest responses to **Section A** questions tracked the content of the extract without selecting relevant material with which to address the question.

The most successful responses tailored their material to the key words in the question from start to finish: these answers engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'intriguing', 'revealing', 'strikingly', 'memorable/memorably', 'entertaining', 'vividly' and 'satisfying'. There were, however, some responses that made only a limited attempt to address these key words. Again this session, in less successful responses, candidates embarked on a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes with little regard to the question. Responses sometimes began with a learned introduction to the text in **Section A**, which was then repeated in **Section B**. Candidates should be told that

detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward; they should tailor relevant material from their knowledge to address the specific demands of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates effectively contextualised the interaction between Amanda and David, particularly focusing on Amanda's contemplation of the pivotal moment when she fell ill. They recognised what makes the moment intriguing, prompting inquiries into why the moment of infection supersedes Amanda's considerations of her own mortality; Carla's involvement in Amanda's storyline; and Carla's notably unmaternal response towards David. Candidates acknowledged the deliberate ambiguity crafted by the author to intrigue the reader.

This was an extract that allowed all candidates to achieve at all levels as it is so close to the start of the text and contains such crucial and central issues and stylistic devices. Most candidates were able to use textual support to comment on the disturbing descriptions of the children, with better responses developing resonances around particular words or phrases – for example, the ambiguous uncertainty around the phrase 'aren't children any more' with the unspoken question of: 'Well if they aren't children, what are they?' That was often set alongside the intriguing and worrying generational role shift between adult and child. Amanda's feverish helplessness and certain fate was contrasted with David's italicised assured knowledge and grasp of meaning and what the future holds.

The most successful responses demonstrated a thorough examination of literary techniques employed by the author to heighten intrigue. These candidates perceptively analysed Amanda's complex circumstances within a fractured reality, where she faces her implied impending death while harbouring concerns for her daughter, yet she is compelled to prioritise identifying the source of her infection. They adeptly contrasted Amanda's deep bond with Nina with Carla's rejection of her son following his transmigration.

The strongest analyses further delved into the author's deliberate use of narrative techniques to captivate the reader, particularly focusing on themes of contamination and its profound consequences. These candidates perceptively evaluated the writer's methods of intrigue. They saw how she enables the reader to join the first personal narrator in considering what is important, such as the complexities of characters like Carla, who may harbour intentions regarding Nina's custody.

Less successful candidates either narrowly focused on the surface-level interpretation of Amanda and David's dialogue focusing on the moment of infection or offered vague observations about techniques used to make the extract intriguing with insufficient reference to the extract.

Question 2

Most candidates effectively contextualised the extract within the opening scene of the play, where Anowa, Badua, and Osam engage in a discussion about Anowa's marital prospects. They recognised this scene as pivotal for introducing key characters like Badua and Osam, whose traditional Ghanaian attitudes towards Anowa, family, arranged marriages, and gender roles are displayed. Furthermore, Anowa's character, described in stage directions as 'hovering around,' emerges as particularly noteworthy due to her more independent stance and apparent rejection of cultural norms. Additionally, the introduction of Kofi Ako, through indirect characterisation, provides insights into themes of masculinity within the narrative.

The most insightful responses perceptively acknowledged the playwright's deliberate use of dramatic devices to reveal the characters and their societal roles within traditional Ghanaian culture. For instance, they noted Badua's assertive role in arranging Anowa's marriage, contrasting it with Osam's passive stance of leaving marital decisions to his wife and her family. Such responses showed Anowa's defiance of traditional expectations by choosing her own partner was also highlighted, along with a mention of Kofi Ako's characterisation, which foreshadows deeper revelations about his masculinity and infertility later in the play.

The strongest responses recognised how stage directions, such as Anowa's symbolic action of scraping her teeth, underscored her lack of agency and its evolution throughout the scene and the play as a whole. They further clearly understood, and explored, how the characters in this scene serve as microcosms of Ghanaian society and their cultural norms during that era. These candidates often considered the foreshadowing of

Kofi Ako's failings. Osam's lack of concern and involvement was both praised as his being more understanding and criticised for not caring about his daughter in equal measure.

Less developed responses offered superficial analyses that failed to engage deeply with the playwright's use of dramatic techniques. Some candidates mistakenly applied Western marital gender roles and power dynamics to their interpretation of Ghanaian traditions, misinterpreting Osam's seeming indifference towards Anowa's marriage as either neglect or a departure from traditional roles, Osam allowing Badua a more dominant role in their marriage. They overlooked the Ghanaian cultural context where it was customary for the wife, and her male relatives, to arrange the daughter's marriage

Question 3

Most candidates effectively contextualized the extract from the end of the novel, recognising its significance as pivotal due to the reactions and attitudes of mainly Ruth, Art, and Patel towards the prospect of Luling residing in a care home for her remaining years. The most adept responses demonstrated a comprehensive exploration of aging-related themes such as memory loss and mortality by analysing the nuanced responses and attitudes of the main characters, in the extract, towards the care home.

The strongest responses delved into the complexities of each characters' attitudes and perspectives on issues affecting the elderly. They provided a careful examination of Ruth's desire to ensure the best care for her mother while grappling with feelings of guilt and concern about Luling's adjustment in a care home setting. Furthermore, the contrast between Western expectations of elder care and traditional Chinese familial norms, where the elderly typically live with their families, was insightfully discussed.

In contrast, less successful responses tended to grasp only the superficial implications of the extract, focusing on general challenges faced by the elderly without delving into the specific nuances of character attitudes portrayed. For example, some responses inaccurately depicted Patel's casual mention of a vacancy in the care home as indicative of callousness or profit-driven motives, thereby overlooking the broader context of his character and his nuanced reaction to the situation.

There was a clear divide between those who saw the retirement home as a pleasant oasis for the elderly and those who saw it as somewhere for uncaring younger family members to get rid of elderly relatives, but most were very censorious of the idea of putting the elderly into a home and most of the actions and comments of Mr Patel and the other workers in the home were subsequently interpreted as uncaring and unfeeling. E.g., 'frail elderly' was often interpreted as an insult, and many saw the reference to 'stupid' as coming from the home staff rather than the resident. Stronger candidates recognised that, considering what it is, the home seems nice and that Ruth's reaction to the 'death sentence' comes from her own horror of aging and guilt about her mother rather than a problem with the home.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to contextualise the extract, recognising the presence of dramatic irony between Khlestakov, portraying himself deceitfully to impress, and his audience, who unwittingly accepts his false identity. The most successful responses exhibited a confident exploration of dramatic techniques, highlighting elements such as Khlestakov's extravagant claims in his monologue and the physical comedy evident in stage directions depicting his near fall. These candidates discerned how the interplay of dramatic irony enhances the comedic impact of the scene while satirising Russian bureaucracy of the time.

The strongest responses critically explored the satirical aspects of the play, particularly focusing on how the playwright critiques hedonism and materialism through the characterisation of both Khlestakov, as deceiver, and those deceived. These responses demonstrated a nuanced understanding of how linguistic and dramatic devices are used not only for comedic effect but also to satirise contemporary issues.

Less proficient responses offered a more superficial understanding, concentrating primarily on Khlestakov's deceptive behaviour and the reactions of others without thoroughly exploring the specific dramatic and linguistic techniques employed to evoke humour and convey social critique.

The extract is full of comic detail, vivid speeches and physical humour that most candidates were able to describe and attach to facets of character such as arrogance, greed, selfishness, lack of self-awareness. Successful responses took advantage of the overwhelming sense of dramatic irony in Khlestakov's description of people being 'awestruck' and 'shaking with fear' which exactly mirrors the reactions of the gullible townsfolk. They appreciated that Khlestakov has found in this provincial environment exactly the level

of ignorance, corruption and sense of insecurity that he so obviously has failed to find in his real-world existence.

In less secure responses, there was some confusion with candidates frequently stating that Gogol depicts Khlestakov as a noble, rich and powerful character. Later comments would clarify that they were fully aware that Khlestakov is lying and pretending to be these things. They needed to establish at the start of their essays that they are aware of his deception to make sense of his motives. Candidates also need to be aware that watermelons at the time were very expensive and a luxury item; some said they were cheap so not a sign of Khlestakov's supposed wealth.

Question 5

Most candidates demonstrated a secure understanding that the stormcock is portrayed as a symbol of beauty and resilience, guiding the speaker through a spiritual awakening. The most successful responses engaged in a detailed analysis of the poem, considering how the poet employs a variety of poetic techniques to depict Pitter's admiration of the bird. Candidates carefully explored the shift from the speaker's search from physical to spiritual sustenance in harsh conditions, to the arrival of the beautiful and resilient stormcock, described in graphic and auditory detail, as a heavenly messenger of hope and endurance in hard times.

The strongest responses conducted a comprehensive analysis of the entire poem, exhibiting perceptiveness in their exploration of Pitter's use of poetic techniques to vividly portray her appreciation of the bird. They focussed on the spiritual journey taken by the speaker, highlighting the beauty and resilience of the bird. They saw clearly how Pitter does this to express her admiration for the physical bird and, metaphorically, to illustrate the role of the bird as a spiritual messenger.

Most candidates made clear comments on the symbolic early significance of the poetic voice's dwelling, with its dismal lexis. Less successful candidates, however, tended to leave their analysis of some of the figurative language a little undeveloped – asserting that the reference to Gabriel's smile linked the bird with a God-like creature without exploring the notions of radiance, glory, power, messaging, perfection, enlightenment or redemption. A key discriminator for this poem was the 'rich merchant' simile, which caused analytical problems and ambiguities for candidates describing 'Stormcock' as essentially a spiritual awakening piece that rejected materialism. Less developed responses tended to grasp only the surface meaning of the poem, such as generalised depictions of the stormcock's beauty, omitting in-depth exploration of language, structure, and poetic form.

Question 6

Most candidates contextualised this memorable and entertaining moment in the short story involving the encounter between Pritam, Doctor Sahib, and Pritam's mother. The most successful responses demonstrated clear understanding of the relational dynamics at play, particularly highlighting the contrast between Pritam's mother, who embodies traditional cultural and societal norms, and the couple, who symbolise a departure from these norms through their unconventional lifestyle choices.

The strongest responses perceptively analysed the characterisation of the key figures in the extract, illustrating how their interactions contribute to making the extract memorable. For instance, these candidates explored the comedic elements arising from Pritam's mother's reaction to the couple, initially misinterpreting their relationship and reacting with shock, perceiving them as 'two guilty lovers.' They further examined Pritam's characterisation as a strong and independent woman who boldly defies societal expectations by choosing a solitary life in the mountains, thereby adding humour to the scene through her deliberate attempts to shock her mother. Such candidates also cleverly explored Doctor Sahib as an eccentric character whose interaction with the mother is made memorable.

Less successful responses exhibited a superficial grasp of the characters' interactions, failing to engage deeply with the author's deliberate construction of this entertaining moment within the extract.

Most candidates found no difficulty in writing about how this passage was memorable, identifying, for example, key features such as the mother's sense of disbelief and horror even, at the desolate setting and dilapidated living conditions that her daughter had chosen. Most candidates were also aware of how Pritam and the doctor took advantage of her mother's feelings to tease her about how she and the doctor were lovers. Stronger candidates responses gave support from the text that allowed them to comment on the impact of the writer's language: such as, for example, the description of the mother as 'flushed' and with 'startled eyes' that captures her parental concern and encourages from the reader a feeling either of

empathy or humorous judgement. They considered how the contrast between the mother's sense of where they were as 'a scene of desolation' and Pritam's understanding and experience of 'the pure mountain sky' captures through emotive language the divide between the values held by the pair.

Some candidates saw the negative views of the mountains, such as the cold, as being those of Pritam or misread the description of the 'empty spaces' as being from her mother's perspective and – again – negative. While better answers commented on the mother's mixed feelings of frustration and yet admiration for her independent daughter, less secure candidates saw Pritam's mother as being wholly critical.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates showed understanding of the changing nature of Carla's relationship with David, and how the transmigration is key to this shift. They often quoted Carla's description of David as a 'monster' and being unable to 'hug' him immediately after the transmigration as a turning point. The descriptions of the way David moved and the lack of connection between mother and son was seen as the start of her fear. Many expressed sympathy for Carla and noted that the warning of another spirit taking over David's body was coming true, and that he was no longer her child. In contrast, a few felt that that her reaction in the aftermath of the transmigration showed a lack of compassion for her son.

Some successful responses took a comparative approach to mother/child relationships which proved to be a fruitful one. They considered Amanda's perspective, seeing her shock at Carla's disowning of David, and compared it with the warmth that the writer creates between Amanda and Nina. While they showed understanding of Carla's fear, some defended David, noting Carla's accusation of him 'killing' animals contrasted with David's very mature words that 'killing and burying' are different concepts, especially since all these animals accessed the contaminated water.

Successful responses often argued that Carla possibly exaggerated David's problems due to her resentment at the change to a son that she has lost. Some even felt that this was all in Carla's mind and that her behaviour, when seen in this light, might be viewed as abusive. They argued that her fear was shown through becoming protective of Nina, for example warning Amanda that David is in the house with Nina, so transferring her fear. Carla's guilt at not protecting David was linked to Amanda's 'rescue distance' and that, however hard they try, mothers cannot protect their children from everything. The strongest responses suggested that that Carla was right to fear David as he was clearly no longer a child but judging from his behaviour and manipulation of the conversation with Amanda in the clinic, a potentially disturbed and dangerous character with his own agenda.

Less secure responses simply told the story of what happens between Carla and David, with brief reference to specific moments in the novel. When they used references such as 'monster', they did not explore the connotations of language. These responses would have been strengthened through learning specific textual detail and considering the lens through which the writer presents the mother/son relationship.

Question 8

Most candidates understood what happens at the end of the play and were able to refer to some specific moments in Phase 3. Many of these explored the change in Anowa and Kofi from when they left Yebe as a joyful couple, ready to work and very much a team, to the alienated couple at the end. Close attention was paid to the difference in dress and how Kofi's hypocrisy and great wealth was represented by his rich garments and being carried by slaves, some commenting that this was precisely what he said he wouldn't do. Anowa's rage was noted and her acerbic comments on him being 'dead wood', a 'woman' in front of his slaves was hugely satisfying for these candidates. A number explored how Kofi's infertility was the cause of the lack of children and that it was therefore right that he committed suicide because he failed to acknowledge this weakness and had blamed Anowa. Anowa's suicide was seen as an end to her suffering but not as satisfying as Kofi's.

The most successful responses reflected on how societal, parental and traditional expectations were a burden for anyone who did not fit the norm. They reflected on the warnings of other characters, including Badua and Osam, and their views on traditions and disastrous consequences for the couple. They explored the theatricality of Phase 3, in particular the entrance and exit of Kofi and the contrast with the bedraggled Anowa ('aged and forlorn in her old clothes...still bare-footed'). They considered Anowa's sense of the ridiculous as she laughs at Kofi being fanned and felt a sense of satisfaction at her public humiliation of him

in front of the elders. The very best showed a strong understanding of the play's dramatic structure, referencing tragedy and explored the effect of Anowa and Kofi's deaths being off-stage.

The contribution of the Old Man and Woman was generally seen as contributing to the thematic concerns of the play and satisfaction of the audience.

Less successful responses simply explained what happens at the end of the play, mainly focussing on Anowa and Kofi's deaths, and struggled to include specific textual detail. Candidates would benefit from a better understanding of dramatic structure, so they can explore the purpose of an ending and the ways in which it affects an audience.

Question 9

Most candidates had some understanding of the changing nature of the relationship between LuLing and Precious Auntie. They recognised that secrecy was at the heart of the conflict that develops as LuLing grows up, as she does not know that Precious Auntie is her mother and therefore has conflicting loyalties. Some considered LuLing's jealousy that GaoLing was the favourite child of 'Mother' while she was left with a nursemaid. Many responses explored the way LuLing acts as a translator for Precious Auntie. 'Hand-talk, face-talk and chalk-talk are the languages I grew up with' was one of the most popular quotations used to highlight the unique qualities of Precious Auntie and Luling's relationship. Successful responses looked at the intimacy of the 'mother/daughter' relationship and saw how LuLing does not value – until it was too late – just how much Precious Auntie cared for her, for example looking after her hair and clothes.

Successful responses explored the impact of LuLing's guilt at not reading the letter informing her of their true relationship. The change in their relationship was noted as Luling defiantly, and disrespectfully, spoke to Precious Aunt about her role in the family as a nurse maid and lies about giving 'Mother' the letter about her visit to Peking. They integrated well-selected textual references and commented on metaphors such as 'I made my face and heart a stone wall.' Some also referred to LuLing's awareness of the changing nature of their relationship and her sense of power, often citing the way that her 'old me was looking at the new me, admiring how much I had changed.' The strongest answers understood Precious Auntie's supreme sacrifice by committing suicide to protect Luling from marrying into the Change family so she could continue to be protected by Precious Auntie from the grave. The guilt and psychological impact on Luling's life and relationship with her own daughter, Ruth was a feature of the strongest responses. These showed understanding of the narrative structure of the novel.

Less successful responses showed confusion about characters' names which meant that some candidates wrote about Luling and Ruth or Ruth and Precious Auntie as though Ruth and Luling were interchangeable. Where they wrote about the right characters, they did so in general terms and their responses lacked specific textual details with which to support and develop their ideas.

Question 10

Most candidates understood that *The Government Inspector* is amusing because of the way Gogol shows that the audience understands more than the characters, particularly about the identity of Khlestakov, and that they behave in ridiculous ways in an ultimately futile attempt to cover up the corruption in their town. They had plenty of examples of officials taking bribes, reading private correspondence, perverting the course of justice and showing little concern for marriage vows.

Many candidates took the approach of identifying the issues raised as serious and the theatrical methods as comical. This allowed all candidates to access the question, with less developed responses explaining various incidents with an assertion that they were also funny because of Gogol's descriptions. Stronger candidates had a sense of how the pretensions of the Mayor and his family were so ridiculous and unrealistic that laughter was the only possible response. These responses often had a perceptive understanding of why exactly satire and humour might be used to deliver a sense of moral outrage or to deliver a crucial message that society needed to heed. They explored the relationship between laughter and self-understanding, or indeed why the old saying about 'If it wasn't so serious it would be laughable' is not a maxim that Gogol adopts. These responses considered the ending, where the Mayor breaks the fourth wall to turn the moral condemnation on the audience. They showed enjoyment of the humiliation of the Mayor as the identity of Khlestakov is revealed, and evaluated the serious consequences to come with the arrival of the real inspector. Most candidates felt little sympathy for the town's officials, as they had brought this situation on themselves.

Less successful responses listed ways in which characters behaved badly or made statements that were clearly false, for example how the sergeant's wife had 'flogged herself.' They were sometimes confused about why the judge took borzoi puppies as a bribe or spent a long time explaining why it is wrong to read someone else's letters. Many could make some comment on the way the Mayor and Judge justify their behaviour, for example how the Mayor refers to his sin as 'little'. In general, less successful candidates included few textual references which made it hard for them to analyse Gogol's dramatic techniques.

Question 11

Most candidates picked up the contrast between the gloom of the first part and the hope of the second in the speaker's feelings about the future. They understood that the speaker gains inspiration from an 'aged thrush' at night, in the dead of winter. Many grasped the metaphorical meaning of the 'Century's corpse' referencing the end of a century and the 'aged thrush' heralding hope for the 1900s. They explored his depressing thoughts, stimulated as he '*leant upon a coppice gate*' and grasped how he becomes more hopeful in the volta when he hears the 'aged thrush' and the 'ecstatic sound.' These responses understood the speaker's state of mind as he considered the landscape and weather reflecting his mood.

The most successful candidates explored poetic devices used to contrast the first and second half of the poem. There was consideration of how the melancholic tone at the start, using the motif of death ('spectre-grey', 'corpse', and 'crypt'), alludes to the speaker's depressed state of mind and the grim winter setting at the end a century, with reference to the effects of industrialisation. These responses recognised how the change in tone, marked by lyrical, religious imagery ('evensong' and 'carolings') announces the entrance of the 'aged thrush' as a 'blessed Hope' for both the speaker and the century to come. A few of the strongest responses reflected on the way Hardy suggests he is unable to access the same joy as the thrush at the start of a new century.

Less successful responses tended to respond superficially to the poem, stating how depressed the speaker appears at the start in contrast to the way he feels when he has seen the thrush. They lacked the analysis of poetic devices used by Hardy to 'memorably convey the speaker's thoughts and feelings about the future.' Some candidates focussed so much on the first part of the poem that they made limited or no reference the thrush. These responses spent a large part of their answer explaining the social, industrial background with little understanding or focus on the question or close analysis of the text. In some cases, they showed misreading of lexis such as 'coppice' and very few explored the adjective 'darkling' in the title, or were confused as to why Hardy uses a negative word to describe a bird which brings hope.

Stronger responses wrote analytically about structure, with the early references to the 'spectre grey' scene contrasted with the voice of the thrush in the second half. They explored how phrases such as 'joy illimited' are used by the poet to show that warmth, joy and vibrancy can be brought back to the world through religion.

The challenge for many candidates in **Section B**, and particularly with poetry, is accurate recall of the text to support ideas and for close exploration of the language and way the poet achieves effects. The most successful candidates showed an impressive memory of the poem.

Question 12

Most candidates understood that greed is at the heart of the narrative and leads to the devastating explosion at the end of the short story. Many used the context of the village's poverty and isolation in mitigation, especially of Namidi whose desire to give his children an education prompted his actions. This understanding limited the moral condemnation of his greed as he tries to keep the oil for himself. Stronger responses engaged with the language to some degree, commenting on the impact of the clear statement that 'no man lacked the capacity for greed', the descriptions of the villagers 'swarming' (with its metaphorical dimension), 'trampling' and 'mania' all of which give a sense of self-centredness at the expense of others. Many explored the way the oil is described at the start, some simply stating that the writer makes it immediately appear unappealing or that makes it clear it will lead to the explosion at the end.

Many candidates considered the context of the story, seeing it as an allegory and highlighting that the real greed is that of the big companies exploiting the land and people of Africa. Others explored the warning given by Namidi's wife, some commenting on the way she had little say in the decision he makes. They contrasted the greed of the adults with the innocence of the children, responding to the poignancy of Ochuko hiding, 'paralysed with terror.' The strongest considered the final moments of the story and the tragic implications for Ochuko, quoting 'but all he heard was the faraway bird-call of the coming dawn.'

Less successful responses confused greed with selfishness and showed some misunderstanding of exactly what happens, for example criticising the little boy for running away and hiding instead of helping the burning villagers. Some did not mention the explosion at all, and therefore were unable to go beyond explaining how Namidi rushes to get the oil for himself. Others retold the story, sometimes with textual detail, but did not evaluate the writer's methods to show how Adagha 'vividly depicts greed.'

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/33
Set Text

Key messages

Successful responses:

- Show a detailed knowledge of texts
- Address the question explicitly
- Support their views with relevant textual reference
- Explore closely the ways in which writers achieve their effects
- Use much direct quotation in **Section B** answers to explore the detail of the writing.

Less successful responses:

- Have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- Narrate or describe aspects of texts rather than answer the question
- Make assertions which are not substantiated
- Merely log or explain writers' techniques
- Have an insufficient range of quotations to support views and explore aspects of the writing in **Section B** answers.

General comments

There was much evidence that candidates had enjoyed the texts they had studied, the majority doing *Fever Dream* and some responding to the poetry anthology, more often in Section A than in Section B. Centres should remind candidates to put the question number in the margin, rather than simply labelling their responses A and B.

Most candidates divided their time well across their two answers for this paper. The two most common problems arose from a lack of focus on the question set and a lack of detailed, specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions. Fewer responses in **Section B** answers this year restricted their range of reference to the extract printed with **Section A** questions. Candidates took notice of the instruction in Question 7 **not** to use the extract printed in **Section A**. Candidates are more familiar with the layout and rubric of the paper.

The strongest answers showed a secure knowledge of the text, with candidates incorporating well-selected quotations to support their ideas. For **Section A** questions, the most successful responses made a developed response to the ways in which the writers achieved effects. For **Section B** questions, the most successful candidates were able to recall from the whole text a range of quotation which they deployed effectively in their response to the question. In less successful responses across both sections of the paper, an absence of direct textual support led to writing that was overly dependent on assertion and explanation. The weakest responses to **Section A** questions tracked the content of the extract without selecting relevant material with which to address the question or simply explained the meaning of quotations.

The most successful responses tailored their material to the key words in the question from start to finish: these answers engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'strikingly.' There were, however, some responses that made only a limited attempt to address these key words. In some cases, candidates embarked on a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes with little regard to the question. They wrote learned introductions that explained what the text is about and its key themes and/or characters in **Section A**, often repeating it in **Section B**.

Candidates should be told that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward; they should tailor relevant material from their knowledge to address the specific demands of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates showed some understanding of this encounter between the two fathers and that this is being recounted by Amanda. Many commented on her husband's desperation to escape in his car. They also referred to his determination to remove David from his car, requiring Omar's assistance. Many candidates recognised the way David behaves like Nina, reaching towards Nina's mole, some seeing this as unsettling. The most successful candidates understood that it is Nina's spirit from the transmigration, which is now within David but that her father, seen in the novel for the first time, does not recognise her and rejects his own child. Some linked this to the symbolism of the rope which is 'finally slack, like a lit fuse.' Most candidates made some reference to the setting, often linking it to the environmental concerns of the novel. Successful responses considered the language, considering techniques such as pathetic fallacy, the ominous dark clouds and the repetition of 'He doesn't' to show her husband's lack of awareness of the pollution which has caused so many deaths, including that of Amanda.

Less successful responses explained what is happening in the given extract, tracking what the two fathers say and do, or commented that this final moment is as confusing as the rest of the novel. They were unsure who is narrating these events and ignored the ominous descriptions of the setting.

Most candidates focused directly on the extract and were able to make some personal response to its effectiveness as an ending. They explained whether they felt the ending provided closure. Successful responses either stated that Schwebelin leaves it deliberately ambiguous or that she makes it clear that Amanda has died and Nina abandoned. Some referred to Amanda's husband being trapped. Less successful responses wrote more generally about how the novel ends, with limited textual references, including quotation, from the given passage.

Question 5

Most candidates showed understanding of some of the ways in which the writer presents the power of the wind, referring to the impression created by the poem's title. They referred to its impact on human beings, with the man 'staggering' and holding on to his hat, and the girl's hair being blown about as she struggles to keep her footing. Many commented on the peace that the speaker experiences at his house, away from the force of the wind. They discussed how Barnes makes direct contrasts between the wild, rapid movement in the first two stanzas with the calm in the last, commenting on verbs, adjectives and specific sound effects.

Successful responses analysed how techniques created particular effects, for example the sense of fear created by the adjective 'quivering' which contributes to the overall sense of chaos. They related this to the overall power of nature over humanity.

Less developed responses identified techniques and made general comments about the effects, often without giving specific examples. This was particularly evident with the rhyme scheme and enjambment which were seen as making the poem flow more rapidly, like the wind, without analysing how. Many referred to the repetition of specific letters, such as the 'w' sound, with less successful responses simply saying it made the wind seem powerful or the description vivid.

Question 7

Most candidates gave a personal response to the ways in which they found the novel frightening, referring to the damage caused by pollution, the relationship between Amanda and David, and the transmigration process. They referred to Carla's fear of David after the transmigration and the ways in which she describes him as a 'monster' and a threat to Nina's safety. Many discussed Amanda's relationship with Nina and the 'rescue distance' seeing her as loving, but also paranoid that something will happen to her daughter.

Less successful responses made general comments about the confusing structure of the narrative and the use of italics to identify David's dialogue. They were uncertain as to what was happening in certain parts of the novel, for example at the start when Amanda is in the hospital and felt that this made it frightening. These

responses referred to some specific moments in the novel, for example when Amanda and Nina see the deformed girl or when David is burying a duck but were unable to quote and comment directly on Schweblin's language.

More successful responses often referred to similar parts of the text but were able to comment on how the normalisation of deformities, evident through the matter-of-fact descriptions, or the seeming lack of questioning about David's burial of animals made the novel frightening. These responses also referred to the unnerving characterisation of David who, as a child, appears to have control over Amanda and be all-knowing. They explored the creation of fear and suspense during and after the process of David's transmigration and the threat to Nina when Amanda is in hospital and loses control over what will happen to her. The very best considered the way fever takes hold of her and the nightmare world into which she is plunged.

Question 11

There were insufficient responses to make useful comment.