

A-level English Language and Literature

Paper 2: Exploring Conflict
Report on the Examination

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General

Paper 2, Exploring Conflict is a demanding one, assessing all five Assessment Objectives across three tasks. Examiners were impressed with the students' ability to recognise the challenges in meeting these Assessment Objectives. Students were able to manage the demands of the different tasks within the allotted times and word counts for Section A, Writing about Society. This meant that they also used their time wisely, reading the extracts given as starting points for their recast in Section A and their essay in Section B.

Rubric infringements were rare. No penalty for Section A exists in either the recast or commentary task, as the rubric only specifies an approximate word count. However, going under or over word count for the recast was potentially self-penalising in terms of available time for the critical commentary and for maintaining control of the style chosen. In the commentaries, most students also clearly understood that AO4 means that connections have to be made to the base text that they had studied and did this with varying degrees of success. Likewise, in response to Section B Dramatic Encounters, most students understood that they were required to refer to different points in the play to shape their interpretation of the specific question focus.

This was the first time that students had encountered the content of this paper, particularly if they had done the AS last year, in an examination situation. Examiners noted that the level of linguistic precision was often markedly weaker in Section B, Dramatic Encounters. Here, examiners reported evidence of more impressionistic responses that were not grounded in an exploration of the language used and chosen by the writer to shape meaning. Whilst there was understanding of the plays studied, students seemed less confident in selecting and applying either concepts, methods of analysis or language levels. Examiners also noted that where language features were identified at word class level many students showed insecurity in labelling these accurately.

To offer points of general feedback, some students

- made unhelpful and irrelevant distinctions between perceived 'literary' and 'linguistic' features
- did not adopt an academic style in their writing, either by leaving quotations unembedded into their sentences or using very colloquial expressions.
- used 'quotation' regularly to introduce the individual text choice selected to discuss instead of either recognising that quotation marks served this purpose, or by talking about the character's speech as a quote eg Stanley's quote.

However, this was a really enjoyable and rewarding paper to examine. Students had obviously enjoyed studying conflict in its different forms and were able to respond to this both creatively and critically. This was especially apparent in their recasts, where they engaged with both the creativity allowed them in Section A as well as the skills of critically assessing their own writing choices. Students also embraced the challenge of writing an extended response to their chosen drama text, calling upon their understanding and classroom study to make their own selections from the text. In a sense, Paper 2 is synoptic in not only calling upon all Assessment Objectives but also in the underlying focus of the specification on point of view and how language choices create representations.

Section A - Writing about Society

In this part of the paper, students present their understanding of the ways that **writers present people**, their **points of view** and their **relationships with others**. The focus of Writing about Society is about how situations of conflict can be used to express ideas about societies and their values. In addition, students demonstrate their skill in adapting and shaping the base text to respond to different re-creative tasks.

The key terms for this section are:

Society: a group of people working and living in a specific location who act out cultural beliefs and practices

Characterisation: the range of strategies that authors and readers use to build and develop characters

Point of view: the perspective(s) used in a text through which a version of reality is presented

Motif: a repeated concrete object, place or phrase occurs in a work of fiction and is related to a particular theme

Base text: the original text from which re-creative writing takes place.

Students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of these through their recreative writing and their critical commentary. Many students were clearly aware of these key terms, using them firstly to shape both their own writing. Secondly, they used their knowledge of these in their discussion of the writer's craft in both the base text that they had studied and in critically evaluating their own choices.

The most popular base text choice was *The Great Gatsby*, followed by *The Kite Runner*. *Into the Wild* was the third most popular and a relatively few number of students had studied *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher* OR *the Murder at Road Hill House*. Whatever text they had studied, students communicated their enjoyment of these, as well as their pleasure in being creative.

Recreative writing (Questions 1,3,5 and 7)

The following marks are awarded for assessment objectives:

AO5 (25 marks) – Demonstrate expertise and creativity in their use of English to communicate in different ways.

In this transformation task expertise and creativity is being assessed through three different strands.

- flair and originality
- sustained use of style
- convincing use of base text

The task itself is generic in that it asks students to recast the base text into an 'account', allowing them to make representational decisions about the use of dialogue, speech and thought, narrative modes and genre. It also calls upon the selection of characterisation strategies and themes and motifs. Examiners were impressed that students (at all levels) understood the nature of the task and took the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of narrative techniques. For each base text, the question identified the designated point of view and, in addition, offered bullet points suggesting the aspects that students *should* consider in their recast. Students were expected to use their knowledge of the base text, using the extract as a springboard for ideas about content and point of view. In practice, this meant that students could select what they wanted to use from

the extract they were given but they could also use their broader knowledge of the whole text. Those students who took this approach were perhaps not so over-reliant on just lifting material from the extract and used their informed knowledge of the rest of the text to create their own. The students who showed flair and originality in taking the text in a new direction were awarded in the higher levels. They demonstrated that ‘originality’ is always within the parameters of their own base text and more broadly that of prose fiction/nonfiction. Often sensible creative choices were made around characterisation, point of view and genre and language and narrative devices were used effectively to display the students’ flair.

The questions themselves varied in whether they featured an included participant or an excluded participant. Each carries comparable demands. For major included participants, successful students understood how the character is constructed by the original writer, but were not constrained by attempting to copy the writer’s style. Students mainly responded well to this with the character of Baba in *The Kite Runner*, attempting to be convincing rather than pastiching Hosseini’s style. With an excluded participant (such as the servant from *The Great Gatsby*), ‘gap-filling’ was required and students who responded to the creativity required by developing a specific character and point of view, rather than replicating Nick Caraway’s narratorial point of view, did well.

Overall, across all the texts and tasks, more successful responses:

- understood the importance of specific moments by picking a clear time frame for an account and/or understood the significance of descriptions of place
- made judicious and careful choices about the presentation of point of view and narratorial focus
- chose to use particular genres as a way to support the shaping and representation of events rather than allowing the genre to become the dominant focus of the writing
- were imaginative in their development of their narrative and characterisation but grounded this in the bullet points they had been asked to consider and their knowledge of the base text
- when using dialogue, were effective in creating productive and accurately presented speech, recognising that speech can be presented in different ways.
- used thought presentation to good effect to support point of view and characterisation
- used multiple narrative techniques (descriptions of time and place, speech and thought, motifs and devices such as in media res etc.)

Less successful responses

- were over-reliant on the base text and introduced very few new dimensions to their account
- wrote very short or very lengthy responses that were self-penalising
- overlooked the audience that they were given for the recast
- ignored the bullet points given to consider in their transformations, interpreting the instruction ‘you should consider’ as optional.

Question 1: *Into the Wild*

Examiners reported that this text was handled well. Both first and third person narratives were constructed and students enjoyed using American dialect in their recasts. Email, office gossip and dialogue with prospective colleagues were chosen as the basis of the account.

More successful responses:

- presented clearly the boss of the construction company
- used references to Chris’ family life, character, ambitions and success in the company well

- noted the boss' anger, frustration and disappointment and exchanges with colleagues were often the most convincing allowing for the base text to be used in interesting ways.
- responded to the question prompt and made clear decisions about constructing a suitable voice / style for the employer, a style that was appropriate and convincing for a construction company setting
- showed awareness of the audience of a fellow employee, constructing a character who would have some knowledge of the construction company structures and processes, and also possibly of Chris too
- focused explicitly on the bullet points provided to focus on the construction company owner's views of Chris' personality and successes whilst in the job: his ability to convince tricky customers to buy kitchens; his remarkable sales' record and the amount of money he earned; the team of people he led; reflecting that success was a family trait, considering Walt's and Billie's own business successes; the apparent contradictions of Chris' character (his anti-capitalist ideas alongside his drive to do well); the owner's feelings about his company and how he felt about Chris' rejection of his job offer; concern about declining sales once Chris had left the company; his lack of understanding about Chris' anti-capitalist ideas and disappointment at Chris' refusal of funding for college
- used the base text to inform their shaping of the content, moving beyond the given passage to reflect on ideas about Chris, his beliefs and ideas, and some of the activities he had been engaged in e.g. his copying business
- focused on subtle details from the given passage and the wider text e.g. the yellow Datsun; the types of books Chris enjoyed reading
- considered Chris' encounters with other characters from the text, such as Westerberg, to shape the possible relationship between Chris and the employer
- clearly located own writing at a specific point in time e.g. immediately after Chris had left the company; whilst Chris was away travelling over the summer; after becoming aware of Chris' fate
- presented carefully balanced use of dialogue and narrative to depict the exchange between the employer and employee
- sustained the writing so that the piece was convincing as a whole

Less successful responses:

- showed limited understanding of the work based environment
- produced interviews with potential employees, using them as a means for discussing Chris' successes - this was not wholly convincing as interviews would rarely focus on other employees
- only partially addressing the bullet points, often focusing solely on the construction company owner's feelings about his own company and this led to minimal focus on Chris and minimal use of the base text
- focused solely on the passage provided, and often only a small part of the given passage (mainly the end section)
- relied heavily on the given passage, often transporting sections from the passage without shaping or mediation to fit their own purposes/stylistic choices
- showed little understanding and awareness of the whole text
- shaped language choices, showing some imaginative elements, but with lapses in control and an inability to sustain the selected style

Question 3: *The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher*

Examiners saw relatively few responses on this text but reported that the majority of students were able to create the voice of William. Most presented the recast as a three way dialogue between William, his father and step-mother. Students showed William responding to the adults' questions, offering the escapade as an innocent adventure instigated by him in the hope of going to see Edward. Students relied on giving a straightforward recount of their preparations, the hiding of clothes, hair cutting, etc. for running away. Less successful responses took the form of a simple first person account with an implicit audience rather than using the audience given to shape the narrative. Students tended to underplay Constance's role rather than suggesting that there was something sinister in her role.

Question 5: *The Great Gatsby*

As this was the most popular of the questions, there was a range of quality in the responses seen. How successful the students were in their recasts depended on how closely they had read the question. Some students chose to frame their narrative with the reporter asking questions and the servant responding; others chose to create a monologue. Other representational choices revolved around the time frame chosen for the account. Some placed the interview after Gatsby's death, while others opted for the peak of Gatsby's popularity. The viewpoint of the servant as the main focus was picked up by most candidates, although the audience of a reporter was sometimes less clear.

More successful responses:

- responded to the question prompt and made clear decisions about constructing a suitable voice and style for the servant
- showed awareness of the audience of a newspaper reporter, and structured their account according to this
- focused explicitly on the bullet point prompts to consider the servant's impressions of Gatsby
- handled the servant's feelings and thoughts of Gatsby sensitively, picking up on the contradictions and enigmatic nature of their employer.
- drew on their knowledge of the whole text to present different aspects to Gatsby's character as a wealthy and generous host, the source of much speculation, with many rumours about his past and current business dealings, a fairly isolated figure, always in search of something, possibly his lost love
- created the servant's impressions of the parties: the bright, exuberant atmosphere; preparation for the parties; the parties themselves; the aftermath and clean-up operation, the varied guests, ranging from minor celebrities to those rare few who had been invited and the conduct of the partygoers as wildly abandoned
- used the base text to inform their shaping of the content, moving beyond the given passage to reflect on ideas about the parties and Gatsby from the wider novel
- focused on subtle details from the given passage and the wider novel
- shaped language choices showing imagination, flair and creativity to present character and atmosphere
- carefully balanced the use of dialogue and narrative to present the exchange between the servant and the reporter
- sustained the writing so that the piece was convincing as a whole.

Less successful responses:

- did not read the question prompt carefully and, whilst a servant character was constructed, showed little awareness of audience
- produced a narrative in the style of Nick Carraway
- addressed one of the two bullet points, but not both, mainly choosing the servant's impressions of the parties and thus there was little focus on the presentation of Gatsby
- struggled to find the balance between loyalty to an employer and desire to share knowledge of the parties and Gatsby
- were derivative in the presentation of the parties and some clearly used the film as their preferred base text
- focused solely on the passage provided and this led to a rather narrow account of the parties, with only minimal reference to Gatsby
- relied heavily on the given passage, often transporting sections from the passage without shaping or mediation to fit their own purposes/stylistic choices
- shaped language choices, showing some imaginative elements, but with lapses in control, or not sustaining the selected style
- created an overly formal or overly informal style that did not seem convincing for the kind of servant that might work at the Gatsby house
- got distracted by social class issues and made this the focus of their recast
- made use of exaggerated figurative language techniques that was not convincing for the selected character made use of extensive Americanisms or slang that obscured the main points being presented.

Question 7: *The Kite Runner*

Because this question focused on the point of view of an included participant, there was perhaps a lack of awareness of the task as 'gap-filling' and this sometimes led to a more derivative use of the base text. Popular chosen styles included letters and first person accounts. Many students opted to present the account as narrative/ prose and showed a good understanding of the elements that these require. Students showed a clear sense of the audience, often choosing Rahim Kahn as the friend. Others invented friends, either naming them or using a less convincing address to 'my friend'. Other key decisions were around the choice of time frame for the account - some students choose to have Baba reflect in America, while some had him confide in a peer whilst in Kabul. There was an interesting diversity of language and voice, demonstrating that students were engaging with the creative spirit of the task.

More successful responses:

- made considered links to the base text, for example using the themes of theft and honour and developing this carefully
- showed a sensitive understanding of the character of Baba, not just the standard view of him.
- focussed on Baba's guilty feelings towards Ali, his sons and his feelings for the women in his life
- explored memories of Amir and Hassan's childhood, with Baba's efforts to compensate for his actions clearly constructed
- used the shift to Baba's point of view to introduce some imaginative new perspectives on the events and the characters – especially of Amir

- thoughtfully interpreted Baba’s sense of conflict and attempts to justify himself to his friend
- showed control of narrative devices, creating a sense of setting and mixing narrative with dialogue
- acknowledged an audience in the early stages of the re-cast and were able to craft their writing accordingly
- showed a sense of flair where they were able to craft the narrative using Pashtun phrases and salutations.

Less successful responses:

- remained quite close to the text and as such struggled to present original ideas
- were unsure of purpose and audience and had Baba blurting out his secret in unconvincing ways to seemingly more of an acquaintance than a friend
- produced dialogue that wasted words with empty content
- created metaphors and similes, along with other features such as alliteration, that did not fit the style of the rest of the recast – perhaps just for something to talk about in the commentary
- were unable to sustain a convincing voice for Baba and slipped into English colloquial language and contractions
- made less sensible choices about the time frame that did not allow for using aspects of the base text fruitfully, for example setting the account shortly after Hassan’s birth limited what Baba could tell his friend
- seemed confused about whether Baba did or did not confess his secret.

Critical Commentary (Questions 2, 4, 6 and 8)

The following marks are awarded for the three assessment objectives:

AO2 (15 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses two distinct strands: identification of language features used and analysis and evaluation of decisions made to shape the text

AO4 (10 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses one strand: making connections (similarities and differences) between their own decisions as writers and the decisions and effects achieved by the writers of the base text

AO5 (5 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses two distinct strands: organisation of the commentary and accuracy of writing

In summary, the task asks students to refer to specific features they have used, apply concepts or language levels and refer to the base text in a coherently structured and expressed piece of writing. The majority of students were aware of these and responded appropriately. Examiners reported a few formulaic responses; this resulted in students not making judicious selections as they were choosing aspects of language that fitted some preconceived plan. Students’ selecting from their own text (as well as the base text) was key to success. Where selections were made carefully, students were able to offer some thoughtful comments on their writing. Mechanical labelling led to mechanical responses. Interestingly, examiners noted that students could sometimes write effective commentaries even if their recast had not been entirely convincing. This

was a result of selecting interesting aspects of their own language choices to explore the shaping of meanings.

It is worth students being mindful that although AO1 is not assessed here, the wording of the level descriptors asks them to refer to language. 'Language' is used in a broad way and students who explored concepts such as narrative point of view or characterisation could apply methods such as speech and thought presentation and identifying different kinds of speech verbs as a feature. Indeed, those students who only picked individual features often found themselves with little to say in terms of the meanings created, especially when they were inaccurate in identifying them.

Another important point of note is that the base text counts as one of the prescribed set texts on the specification and students who made only cursory references to it, or sweeping comments on content, impacted on their AO4 mark quite significantly.

More successful responses:

- considered the relationship between their own writing and the base text
- reflected on specific and precise language choices that they made in their own writing
- moved beyond a narrow definition of 'language' as individual features, successfully highlighting ideas about language, such as narrative, motifs, power, politeness, interpersonal relationships etc.
- showed a perceptive understanding of the base text, the writer's choice of narrative and language techniques and the effects intended
- produced well organised and accurate writing, signposting commentaries helpfully for the reader.

Less successful responses:

- described own writing with minimal reference to any language detail
- did not acknowledge themselves as creating the text
- struggled to comment on the language choices in the base text compared to their own where their account had been derivative and too close to the original
- chose a quotation from the base text and then described the changes that they had made in adapting particular sentences
- selected language levels/features on the basis of being able to identify them or without discussion of how these were shaped to construct meanings
- applied language labels inaccurately or imprecisely – for example, in misidentifying specific word classes or using words like imagery
- made minimal reference to the base text, focusing solely on own writing, or focused almost entirely on the base text and analysing the writer's choices without considering their own writing
- adopted an AS model by selecting four key points only for discussion
- structured commentaries chronologically, selecting features from each paragraph in order of use
- made connections only about content or narrative perspective
- wrote lengthy responses, listing almost every choice rather than choosing judiciously from the recast and looking at patterns and meanings.

Section B – Dramatic Encounters

In this part of the paper, students explore **the ways that conflicts** are presented, **the meanings that can be inferred** from the language use and **the contextual reasons** for these conflicts. In

their study, students will have analysed areas relevant to the study of drama and dramatic discourse, including how playwrights represent natural speech features, use language to create distinctively different characters, show characters asserting power and positioning others via their language and behaviour and use the idea of conflict to create dynamic narratives and address the wider themes of the play

Key terms for this section are

Speech acts: the forms and functions associated with particular utterances and types of speech

Felicity conditions: the conditions needed for a speech act to achieve its purpose, such as the authority of the speaker and the situation of the speaker

Conversational maxims: explicit principles that provide a backdrop for conversation to take place so that speakers can easily understand one another

Politeness strategies: distinctive ways in which speakers can choose to speak to avoid threatening face

Impoliteness: the act of directly threatening face (using impoliteness strategies)

The following marks are awarded for the three Assessment Objectives

AO1 (15 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses three distinct strands:

- use of concepts, methods and terminology
- selection of and analysis at different/appropriate language levels
- expression and presentation of ideas

AO2 (20 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses three distinct strands:

- an ability to interpret and evaluate the question focus
- selecting appropriate detail
- analysis of authorial craft

AO3 (10 marks)

The mark scheme shows that this assesses two distinct strands:

- generic conventions of drama (specific dramatic conventions and the affordances of the stage such as soliloquy, asides, use of theatrical space, stage directions)
- the influence of contextual factors on the negotiation and shaping of meaning (these include the social, historical, political, and literary influences on the production and reception of the play)

This section was handled with mixed success. Students had clearly been well taught, and responded to their set text in detail. Some students focused on close analysis of the given passage and wider parts of the play. However, some students approached this question as a literature response, offering little by way of analysis of linguistic features when exploring the given passages or the wider text. Of all the Assessment Objectives, AO1 was less well done, either because students did not select any levels, concepts or features to identify and explore or because they struggled to apply some of the key concepts with understanding. This was especially true of politeness and Grice. Students are able to select from language levels and features, as well as these key concepts. Some students might have been produced stronger AO1 responses had they applied what they understood about discourse and lexis rather than struggle with concepts that they could not apply with confidence to the text. AO2 allowed some thoughtful range of comments

on meanings with lots of scope for choice. Many students shaped their answers around the interpretation, using AO1 and AO3 to support their points. This often allowed for a more considered approach and foregrounded the use of the extract alongside the different points they selected. However, students could also successfully start with language and use the patterns seen in the writers' choices to link to the specific question focus. AO3 was often present but rarely matched the Level 5 descriptors. Most students showed some consideration of contextual factors and made general (and sometimes sweeping) comments on social contexts and some genre conventions. The latter is an area where students should focus – remembering it is a play wasn't always evident in responses, with many mistakenly calling it a novel. The overwhelmingly most popular text choice was *A Streetcar Named Desire* with *Othello* the second most popular. Some had selected *All My Sons*, and it was encouraging to see that a number of centres had chosen *The Herd*.

Overall, more successful responses:

- explored conversational strategies that are given to characters to shape identity, for example turn-taking, exchange structures, co-operation, im/politeness strategies, inference and implication
- selected language levels and used precise terminology to identify features in support of the concepts discussed
- explored physical descriptions, stage directions and orthographical conventions to respond to the questions and to highlight tension/conflict
- identified the use of different speech acts carefully and explored their associations with particular characters and in interaction
- evaluated how distinctive personal vocabularies, speech patterns and registers given to characters could link to the interpretation
- selected social, historical and political contextual points relevantly and integrated these into the interpretation
- explored the nature of tragedy, melodrama etc. in the light of the play studied and the question focus
- included relevant references to specific literary critical and other theoretical stances such as psychology (although those from non-academic readings were seen infrequently)
- recognised that these were examples of dramatic discourse and kept sight of the writer's crafting

Overall, less successful responses:

- misunderstood Korte's body language theories and used proxemics as a catch all for any stage direction
- interpreted sections of the dialogue as face threatening acts without explaining what aspect of face that they were threatening
- applied spoken gender theory to the plays unhelpfully
- were inaccurate in labelling features - for example, commonly identifying proper nouns as pronouns
- showed little awareness of AO1 and the important of a precise linguistic focus to support the interpretative elements
- used quotations without linguistic description
- did not use an academic register, often writing colloquially
- overlooked discussion of genre conventions
- treated characters as real people and ignored the role of the writer
- made sweeping judgements with social contexts, especially with regard to gender.

***Othello*, William Shakespeare**

Question 9

This was the most popular question on *Othello*. The passage provided was mostly used well by students to explore different aspects of the question focus, and was explored in more detail than the passage for question 10.

More successful responses:

- focused closely on the passage to explore the contrast between Cassio's and Iago's responses to reputation
- examined the reputation of Iago as 'honest' throughout the play
- selected relevantly from the rest of the play to consider: differing attitudes towards reputation as expressed by Iago in scene 1; Iago's assertion that Cassio's reputation and position was ill-founded given his lack of experience in the field; Othello's status and reputation as a general which displaces his position as 'other'; Othello's loss of reputation throughout the play, culminating in his striking of Desdemona in Act 4; Desdemona's changing reputation from a noble woman / daughter to 'the cunning whore of Venice'
- addressed ideas about Elizabethan attitudes towards the importance of reputation within society
- contrasted male / female expectations of reputation, with male reputation located within the professional domain whilst female reputation resided within notions of virtue
- offered critical interpretations to consider ideas about reputation with reference to both Iago and Othello
- used reference to genre and dramatic technique to illuminate their points and to give the sense of the text being a play.

Less successful responses:

- described the given passage without linguistic detail
- made reference to wider points of the play without a clear focus on the question
- described reputation in only very general terms
- focused only on the exchanges between Iago and Cassio, without addressing the function of the *Asides*
- failed to comment on Shakespeare's crafting of the given passage, or of the wider play
- offered learned critical comment without clear reference to the question focus.

Question 10

Not as popular a question choice and the passage provided was used with mixed success by students. Some students paid close attention to the scene whilst others referred to it briefly, using it as a springboard for wider discussion of the wider play. Here some students found it difficult to keep the whole wording of the question in mind – many seized upon 'presenting tension' and forgot about the gender aspects.

More successful responses:

- made reference to the humour and innuendo shown by Iago in this scene
- reflected on Cassio's stance as mediator whilst enjoying Iago's witticisms

- selected relevantly from the rest of the play to consider different aspects of the question focus: different aspects of Desdemona’s relationship with Othello, contrasting scene 1 with scene 4 for example; Desdemona’s assertion of love for Othello to the Duke and to her father in scene 1; Iago’s description of Desdemona’s relationship with Othello to Brabantio in scene 1; Desdemona’s support of Cassio despite Othello’s apparent unwillingness to support him; Emilia’s description of men in act 5; Emilia’s refusal of Iago in the final scene of the play; Cassio’s relationship with Bianca
- made some sensible observations about Elizabethan attitudes towards male / female roles
- addressed the genre of the play as a tragedy (although this was often not embedded or explored)

Less successful responses:

- did not fully engage with the passage provided, sometimes confusing Desdemona with Emilia
- did not fully engage with Cassio’s relationship with Desdemona and Emilia
- responded to Iago’s witticisms at a literal level
- considered attitudes towards women and gender roles during the Elizabethan era in an over-simplified and often highly stereotypical way
- did not consider Desdemona’s role as anything other than as Othello’s wife
- made reference to contexts of production in an overly simplified way, with comments that were not embedded into a discussion of the question focus.

All my Sons, Arthur Miller

Question 11

This was the more popular choice for *All My Sons* and well done overall. Examiners noted that students were often more precise and specific in their discussion of language than in response to the other texts. There was a good understanding of the details of the extract and a secure grasp of the wider implications of ‘feelings of guilt’.

More successful responses:

- recognised the devices Miller uses to represent speech and explored the effects of these choices
- focused on the interaction between Ann and Chris carefully
- offered close analysis of specific features and concepts such as hesitations, ellipsis, modality and American colloquialisms
- engaged with Miller’s use of genre conventions such as stage directions
- contrasted this extract with Keller’s guilt as presented at different points of the play
- offered contextual insights into stagecraft and genre and the ways that Miller uses these to shape the dramatic discourse
- applied critical responses and ideas about tragedy helpfully.

Less successful responses:

- preferred to focus on Keller’s feelings of guilt and overlooked the starting extract
- referred broadly to aspects of genre and made sweeping statements about its tragic elements.

Question 12

This was the least popular choice. Responses were often less convincing, perhaps because this was not a thematic question and asked students to think more about the characteristics of disagreements and their more complex causes within the play.

More successful responses:

- commented on Sue's face threatening acts, exploring Miller creates these in the language choices and the ways that these link to positive and negative face
- offered close analysis of the exchange between Ann and Sue, allowing students to explore a variety of linguistic features from a variety of language levels.

Less successful responses:

- were unable to make careful selections from other points, referring more broadly to the disagreements in the play
- identified Sue's language as being face threatening but without explaining what aspect of face it threatened
- used quotations descriptively, or used very general terms to label features – for example, using lexis as a catch-all term for any word selected.

A Streetcar Named Desire, Tennessee Williams**Question 13**

This was the most popular question. The passage provided was mostly used well by students to explore different aspects of the question focus.

More successful responses:

- explored the interplay of control in this passage – Stanley's measured assertion of control and dominance whilst Blanche visibly slips out of control
- explored some of the different ways that Blanche's loss of control is presented in the passage: language use, a strong marker of her identity as an English teacher and refined southern lady; reality, sinking into fantasy and illusion; bodily control – resorting to threats of violence and finally her 'inert body'
- considered Stanley's loss of control over his animalistic and sexual impulses
- selected relevantly from the rest of the play to consider different aspects of the question focus: Blanche's loss of control over Stella and Mitch at different points of the play; Blanche's loss of self-control when she kisses the young man; Blanche's loss of control at the end of the play when she is taken away; Stanley's loss of physical control; Mitch's loss of control in scene 9
- considered Williams' crafting of proxemics, kinesics and haptics, as well as sound and light symbolism
- considered Williams' placement of the incident with the prostitute in the given passage to highlight Blanche's situation and predicament
- explored Williams' crafting and language choices from selected wider points of the play
- applied a range of linguistic levels to explore Blanche and Stanley's language use in both the given passage and at wider points within the play considered face theory to explore the tensions between Blanche and Stanley in the given passage
- explored aspects of tragedy and melodrama
- considered factors affecting text production, such as roles of women

- considered use of off-stage action for the presentation of brutal and shocking events for the audience.

Less successful responses:

- did not address the actual question, instead focusing on ‘conflict’
- responded to the question focus in quite a broad or general way, considering only Blanche’s loss of physical control at the end of the given passage
- selected minimally from the rest of the play, with only brief references
- selected a number of different points from across the play, but only identified these points as relevant without further discussion or development
- selected scenes that did not focus on the question focus, instead offering a broad analysis of key language features in isolation - this was particularly the case when addressing scene 1, or the symbolism of the ‘streetcar’ and Elysian Fields
- made only very minimal reference to Williams’ crafting and did not refer to any genre conventions
- applied ideas about power, face theory and cooperative speech in very general terms with little explanation of how they contributed to loss of control
- applied gender theory rather unhelpfully suggesting that Williams used Lakoff’s ideas
- addressed Williams’ personal background and circumstances without embedding comments into a discussion of the question focus
- over-simplified gender roles and made sweeping generalisations about attitudes and responses to violence and sexual violence in the 1950s.

Question 14

The passage provided was mostly used well by students to explore different aspects of the question focus.

More successful responses:

- examined different aspects of the question focus to consider: the decline of the old south represented through the characterisation of Blanche in comparison with the vibrancy of New Orleans characterised by Stanley; physical representations of the old south through Blanche’s aging and refusal to be seen in the light; a new world order represented by Stanley – his Polish heritage and war record; Stella’s positioning between the old southern values held by Blanche and new values held by Stanley
- employed a connective approach, integrating relevant contextual discussion linking Blanche’s deterioration with the demise of the Old South
- explored language use to reflect different characters and the values they hold: Stanley’s use of minimal responses, aggressive, blunt and taboo language; the affectations and mild taboo of Blanche’s language use;
- selected relevantly from the rest of the play to consider different aspects of the question focus: the poker night to explore male/female conflicting values and interests
- made sophisticated comments about the role of story-telling and how this reflects the wider theme of illusion vs. reality.

Less successful responses:

- made reference to values without full understanding of the values presented within the play
- described the differences between old south and the new world order without linguistic detail

- examined face theory and maxims of cooperative speech in very general terms
- identified a number of wider points from the play without clear discussion of the question focus
- overlooked the significance of the context of where and when in the play for the more obvious wider social contexts and clash of cultures between Stanley and Blanche

The Herd, Rory Kinnear

Question 15

This was the most popular choice of question. Overall, it was a pleasure to read responses to this text and it was clear that students had engaged with the play. Students used the starting extract well and navigated confidently around other sections to find other forms of the question focus.

More successful responses:

- saw subtleties in the power relationships between the characters, particular that between Patricia and Ian
- appreciated the naturalistic elements of the play in terms of setting and the vernacular registers adopted by the characters
- explored modes of address and turn-taking as crucial elements in disputes
- understood that Andy's situation was used dramatically by Kinnear to create the tragic elements and that this was the backdrop to all the disputes on stage
- applied Grice's maxims appropriately, exploring how the flouting of these adds to the tension and disputes
- chose politeness/impoliteness as concepts to explore with the question focus, especially in the starting extract between Ian and Patricia
- explored the significance of stage directions and of props such as the phone
- discussed schemas in interesting ways – for example, when citing Claire's announcement of her pregnancy or the family meeting Claire's new partner Ian – and the effects on the audience of the breaking of these.

Less successful responses:

- referred to other sections in descriptive ways
- did not engage with the details of the actual family disputes being presented – for example, other characters' responses to Ian's reappearance after his previous desertion of the family
- did not signpost the selection of different points of the play clearly
- did not make any references to sections other than the extract, which limited potential AO2 mark
- identified speech acts without saying how these contributed to the dispute
- overstated different types of power, or used power as the only interpretative element of disputes.

Question 16

This was a much less popular choice of question, perhaps surprising given the opportunities to explore the relationships between Carol and Patricia, in addition to that of Carol and Claire.

More successful responses:

- understood that ideas of motherhood were central to the play, not only connected to relationships between the characters but also in the effect on Claire of Carol's treatment of Andy

- explored different forms of mother-daughter relationships – eg friendship, multigenerational, nurturing etc. – and made selections from the play to look at these
- identified how turn taking, turn allocation, back channelling feedback and dispreferred responses could present the difficulties in the relationships and signal resentments - especially Claire's bitterness about her childhood.

Less successful responses:

- did not really engage with the complexities of the mother-daughter relationships presented
- overstated the exertion of power, especially positional power, in the mother role with adult children.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks (*delete if appropriate*)

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)