

Examiners' Report  
June 2014

GCE English Literature 6ET03 01

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## Introduction

On this occasion over 4100 candidates sat the exam.

Familiarity with the requirements of the paper means that candidates followed the rubric and answered on the correct number of texts. Some fairly minimal coverage of a third text is occasionally a cause for concern.

We expect, and mostly get, a basic literary competence from the responses seen although this is not always effectively or appropriately applied. We would just remind all users of the exam to be familiar with the wording of the assessment objectives and the full expectations of what is required in order to attain the higher bands.

In particular the requirements of AO3 and AO4 assume that candidates are able to compare texts and demonstrate diverse responses to them across different periods of time. Comparisons are often very brief and perfunctory as the writer moves from one text to another. The links need to be central and integrated in order to score highly. Contexts need to consider the time of writing as well as the time of reception and we are increasingly aware of the inability to distinguish between the time of writing and the time written about in the case of historical novels. The use of named critics is appropriate, as is reference to critical theory or critical movements as long as they are integrated into the candidate's own response. Too often the references are left to stand alone and to do the work for the candidate.

We saw fewer attempts to deal with contexts when dealing with the unseens this time, however quite a large number of responses did not always come directly to terms with the need, for AO2, to respond to meaning and to produce a literary response to show how that meaning is conveyed to the reader.

## Question 1

As usual this was by far the more popular of the unseens, being tackled by more than three quarters of the candidature.

An answer that began 'The poet seeks to encapsulate the sense of ancestral guilt held by white post-colonial culture...' had found a socio-political framework on which to hang a well-focused answer.

A well-focused answer will often indicate understanding from the start.

Evidence of understanding is important; it is the third bullet point of AO2 after all.

Despite the clues to be found in the information provided about the poet, as well as the title of the poem itself, surprisingly few answers picked on the issue of colonialism as the main focus of the writer's thoughts.

A number of answers thought the poem was about the end of slavery or a more general shift of power, perhaps a violent revolution. Some thought the poem was specifically about Jamaica, although there is no evidence for this. Many answers tackled the poem stanza by stanza, looking at individual details but not really providing a sense of being on top of the meaning and therefore not reaching the higher bands for AO2.

The ambiguities of the poem left many candidates floundering, perhaps taking the *angry clouds*, *surf* and *storm* literally rather than metaphorically. There was much reference to pathetic fallacy and other literary devices, but often mere identification was insufficient without comment and analysis of what the effects of such features might be. Specific sections such as the sections about the *green tree in this quiet garden* and *dark-skinned love*, found a number of improbable interpretations and the ambiguities of the final moments of the poem and the identity of *my brother* left many in a state of confusion. Nevertheless many candidates did explore the possible identities of who the *dark-skinned love* might be, gave plausible interpretations of the ending and found structural points such as the movement from the *perhaps* of the poem's opening to the *almost certainly* of the final stanza and the repeated opening line of stanza four.

General responses to the feelings of grief, loss, the passing of time, and indecision about whether to leave tended to focus on individual words or phrases rather than any overview of meanings.

Nevertheless, detailed responses to the ideas behind the *situation* and its link with *retreat* and *brutal tenancy* and exploration of technical usage such as the caesura, ellipsis, repetition, archaic language, assonance and alliteration often lead to considered interpretations of the poem and how it works for the reader.

The irregular structure, lack of a regular metre and rhyme scheme need more than mere identification and to comment on the lack of something that one might expect to find in a poem is not very helpful. High marks are given when evidence for a judgement were provided.

Some saw the poem as a dramatic monologue or the inner voice of the poet, or his persona; perfectly valid interpretations showing a literary engagement.

Examiners were critical of the frequent disconnect between analysis and understanding.

Some, often very long, answers dealt individually with structure, form and language sometimes going over the same material several times and to little effect.

Ian McDonald's poem, 'A White Man Considers the Situation', depicts how the poet - as a white colonialist - no longer feels welcome in the country he used to know as his home. McDonald describes how it seems nature itself is pushing him out, with 'angry clouds' and 'ominous' surf telling him he must leave.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

This candidate has provided a clear, well-focused introduction. The essay scores AO1: 10; A02: 28 (38/40).



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Show evidence of your understanding of the poem; it is a key element of A02.

Overall, McDonald's poem provides a perspective on racial liberation not often considered, as with the renewed dominance of native power the poet, as a 'white man', feels sidelined and unwelcome despite being born in his family living in the Caribbean for many generations. However, throughout the poem McDonald subtly conveys that his situation is to be expected, and comparing his 'days still filled with pleasure' to the 'brutal tenacity' of the past. Despite not wanting to let go of his homeland and the moments he lives there, McDonald ends the poem with a climactic admittance of his race's guilt: 'no one is to blame except my brother.'



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is another successful essay which the writer brings to a neat conclusion as shown in this clip.

The essay was awarded AO1: 10; AO2: 28 (38/40).



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Try to provide an overview in your concluding remarks. It shows that your answer has a sense of structure; an important part of AO2.

However, even when complaining about his situation today, he is aware of the previous 'brutal tenancy' of colonialism, and how ~~the~~ white superiority was a 'grip of power' on the country. McDonald's use of violent ~~and~~ words such as 'brutal' and 'grip' demonstrate how he is aware of the destruction ~~and~~ and domination of the previous system.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Another extract from the same script shows the candidate's confidence in exploring the poem's use of language.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Use short, apt quotations to illustrate points.

These extracts are from an essay written at a much lower level than the previous one.

From the title of the poem, 'A white man considers the situation', we are introduced by the idea that the speaker describes or perhaps ~~psychoanalyses~~ ~~psychoanalyses~~ ~~psychoanalyses~~ psychoanalyses the fact that today's society is not what it used to be.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The introductory sentences make fairly basic points but the candidate does not help himself/herself by misspelling a key word. The candidate scored AO1: 4; AO2: 7 (11/40).



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Be clear, but also accurate, in your writing.

Another extract from the same essay.

The repetition of 'slides' furthermore shows how angry the speaker is with the world. 'The best measure of time' suggests that the speaker is able to see the greed through time only, as time only shows. Also 'my father's father planted once a green tree', is suggestive that a long time has passed. 'Green' perhaps suggests life and happiness and the

① Politicians are corrupted as well. For them, everything is money and power.

phrase "quiet 'quiet garden' is emphasising the fact the world was so much better in the past, it was pleasant. The phrase 'to grace my grandson's chair' might <sup>christening</sup>

suggest the shift to a more secular society, the chair is no longer needed.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate is being rather speculative in his comments here. There is evidence of incomplete understanding.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Always be as precise as possible in your comments on meaning.

This writer has a good sense of genre and shows promise of an emerging overview.

The poem is a dramatic monologue, with the poetic voice of 'the white man' reflecting on his loss of power and his strong feeling that he is <sup>no longer</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>on his own land</sup> welcome. The title instantly places a focus on race and appearance, suggesting the poem is a comment on colonialism, offering flashbacks to how things once were when the white men were in 'the grip of power'. There is a change in tone within the six stanzas; in the opening line it is one of contemplation and questioning 'perhaps it is time to retreat', in contrast to the final stanza's declaration 'Almost certainly will have to go from here' suggesting the 1<sup>st</sup> person poetic voice has reached a decision through his thoughts ~~revealed~~ <sup>revealed</sup> in the poem.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is clearly a very confident writer whose essay scores  
AO1: 9; AO2: 28 (37/40).



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Make an immediate impression of being on top of poetic genre and the poem's meaning.

## Question 2

Many candidates who chose this option clearly felt that it was a more straightforward option, although many find it more difficult to apply literary terminology to a piece of prose, often lapsing into summary and paraphrase. Identifying the unequal relationship between the two characters was easier than identifying how the writer used the dialogue and her narrative voice to present the hierarchy in the two characters' interaction. Many focused on the physical appearance of Damian and the specialised language of catering and restaurants to show how Lev seems to be an outsider. Many quite rightly identified him as a non-native speaker of English. They also felt that the reader was encouraged to be on Lev's side by virtue of references to such details as the low rate of pay, strict, almost military discipline in the work place and long working hours as well as the threats of instant dismissal for transgressions in behaviour. Damian's use of Olev rather than Lev was identified either as a mistake or as an insistence on a more formal usage. In any case there is a strong response to class division between the participants suggested by their respective roles, including Damian's short, sharp instructions about how the kitchen workers are expected to behave, his fast-vanishing smile, the visual frisking and the details of appearance and dress, especially the lemonade shirt and the shaven head. His uneasy reaction to the news of the death of Lev's wife led to comments on Damian's inability to deal with real feelings. The intriguing, and surely ironic, comparison between the experience of working in the restaurant and being a member of an orchestra provoked some interesting and valid comments. The presentation of the off-stage presence of G K Ashe and the ironic presentation of his *magnanimity* by the writer was one indicator of quite subtle insights into the writing.

The use of third person narrative allows us to discover details we might have not otherwise. For example, 'then Damian 'had the Ethel of smile that faded and died as soon as it touched his lips'. This shows that he has a false air about him that Oler may not have picked up on.

~~Another way we can see that he~~

is false is that despite his expensive suit he uses colloquial language such as 'gob'. This is not a term ~~that~~ he would use if he was as higher socially as he pretends to be. If that were so he would have been better educated and use different language.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

This candidate makes some valid comments on language. There are good examples of language usage and comments on the effects they have on the reader.

The essay was awarded AO1: 8; AO2: 22 (30/40).



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Make precise comments and illustrate them clearly.

Dominic uses a mixture of ~~the~~ jargon in his speech. 'Bain - marie' 'jet soeurs', alongside high order lexis of 'magnanimity'. This can be seen to intimidate her and to scare her into working hard. However, this is juxtaposed to his much more colloquial vocabulary of 'gosh' 'god' 'bunch'. The language used by Dominic can be seen to welcome her and ~~assure~~ making her feel comfortable, as well as intimidating him.

Dominic's use of interrogatives and imperatives 'Now, come...' 'never eat the food, right?' demonstrate an assertion of his authority and show how Tremain has used language, in this instance to shape the role of Dominic.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

Here is a clip from another response which makes comments on language use, however comments on language need to be illustrated.

This essay was awarded AO1: 6; AO2: 17 (23/40).



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Point, comment and illustrate is a sound method of developing your ideas. Use appropriate terminology.

### **Question 3 (a)**

This was the less popular of the options in this section and candidates seemed to find it challenging to juggle the four terms contained in the question. Valid comparisons tended to focus on the very different relationships with lovers, husbands, friends and parents to be found in the novels and poems, with some interesting variations such as relationships with God; not just Donne but also Father Arsenios. Hardy's treatment of the ways his version of a divine force dealt with Tess was an interesting and valid variation on this. Links between the texts were often well managed and many answers dealt not only with the male/female issues but also same sex ones when tackling Carlo, Nick Carraway, Katherine Philips and Duffy.

We should remind candidates that links do need to be present throughout for the higher bands of AO3 to be within reach. Often we read essays that seemed for long stretches to be focused just on one text at a time making very tenuous links when moving onto the next one.

Another feature of weaker answers is to treat the poetry as very incidental to the main discussion on the novels.

Here are extracts from a high scoring response.

The essay scored AO1: 9; AO2: 9; AO3: 17; AO4: 18 (53/60).

The need for loyalty and friendship as well as love and passion depends ~~on~~ entirely on the relationships which are portrayed and on the texts. In "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", Tess has for a time, the passions of ~~Angel~~ Alec, the love of Angel and the friendship and loyalty of the Wilkingtons but she craves both loyalty and love from Angel. ~~which~~ <sup>This</sup> would indicate that this statement can be agreed with in terms of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles". In ~~the~~ "The Great Gatsby", Gatsby is in love with a lost ideal but has the friendship of Nick, due to the corrupted society at the time though, Fitzgerald implies that the needs of his characters are more materialistic. Therefore in this case, the statement can be disagreed with. Duffy's "Rapture" which is emotion~~s~~-filled and ~~accessible~~ can be understood by all, highlights the importance of emotion and memory over that of friendship and loyalty.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This suggests a clear overview of the topic and a sense of how the three texts are going to be used in the discussion.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

A good introduction should help set up your argument.

Tess and Angel do indeed fall in love, surrounded by the "clear", "bracing" and "ethereal" dairy-lands of Talbothays. Angel, rather like Gatsby's love for Daisy sees Tess ~~as~~ as an ideal, calling her names such as "Artemis" ~~and~~, "Demeter" and "other fanciful names" which she doesn't understand. Compared with 'Rapture', ~~the~~ Angel and Tess' love is not explicitly displayed, Hardy in fact rewrote the book three times in order to make it suitable for "family reading." Tess and Angel's love is indicated in the times they are alone together. When Angel carries Tess over the water Hardy indicates an "understanding between them." The lexical field of the human anatomy "breath", "eyes", "arms", "shoulder" and "cheeks" as well as Tess' intensified sentiment indicates the passion between them. Due to the social limitations that surrounded Hardy this extract of the book was initially removed in order to publish it because it was deemed as too inappropriate. Modern readers ~~now~~ today, would pick up on the implied passion between the characters but would not consider it inappropriate.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

An impressive analysis which explores language with detailed illustration. There is also exploration of contexts integrated into the argument.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Detailed exploration of this kind will score highly.

This candidate is not a high achiever but has made some attempt to adopt a critical voice, make comparisons and show awareness of other readers.

The essay scored AO1: 6; AO2: 5; AO3: 8; AO4: 9 (28/60).

Carol Ann Duffy's fifty-two poem collection; 'Rapture' tells a love affair from beginning to end, the poems towards the beginning are filled with sexual imagery and passion, something that Duffy frequently highlights in her poetry, through time the passion Duffy has for her lover intensifies into an obsession, as can be shown in the poem 'Haworth' where Duffy transforms the land around her into features metaphors for features on her lover's body, she is constantly transfixed on the image of the person she loves. 'The Guardian' defines 'Rapture' as "a map of true love", and this certainly reflects Duffy's own view, she tries to focus on the universality of love in her poetry stating in an interview that "the 'you' in the poems is anyone".



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This writer has a reasonable overview of the *Rapture* collection. There is also a reference to another critical voice.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

If you do what this candidate has done you will hit the 'structure' element of AO2 and the 'other readers' element of AO3.

John Donne, alongside Duffy seems to suggest and show that the need for love and passion is much greater than loyalty or friendship. This can be seen from some of Donne's earlier poetry, two specific poems are 'To his mistress going to bed' and 'The Flea'. In both, Donne has no interest in friendship or loyalty, he just wants to have sex with the women to which he is talking to, he is not interested in a long term thing either, simply a one night stand. These earlier poems reflect Donne's younger life, he was as promiscuous as his poems suggest until he met Ann More, the daughter of the man he was working for, they fell in love but lived a life of poverty after Ann's father found out and cut off her allowance. When Ann died Donne had been so devoted to her that he became celibate, he ~~turned~~ rejected his catholic upbringing and became a protestant canon.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The writer is trying just a bit too hard here. The link is sound enough, although not developed. The contextual knowledge is detailed but does not really help the argument.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Make sure that comparisons are precise and clearly illustrated and that contexts are absolutely relevant to your argument.

### Question 3 (b)

This was by far the most popular question on the paper and there is certainly no shortage of material in the set texts. Most candidates managed to focus on exploring the dysfunctional but a number did attempt to offer a more balanced argument finding evidence of successful relationships in their chosen texts. Whichever approach was taken, it was important to find points of comparison between texts.

Some found opportunity to see the repressive and hypocritical nature of the societies within which the texts are set to blame for the dysfunctional relationships and this is clearly important for both AO3 and AO4.

When dealing with Duffy, an immensely popular text, we noted the trap of assuming that the poems are autobiographical and that the unnamed lover is Jackie Kay. There is little evidence for the gender of the lover in the poems themselves and Duffy herself seems to want the poems to be read just as love poems. Many candidates use the evidence of just one or two poems from the collection to make a point about relationships. It is more productive, and proved to be the case, when the volume is dealt with as a whole, to show the stages of the relationship and hence the process of failure can be explored as it might be in one of the novels.

The pairings were much as with the responses to Q3(a) with some really powerful responses to some of the Donne poems such as *Batter my Heart* and *Nocturnal Upon St Lucy's Day*. The violence of the former was used in comparison with the violence of someone like Tom Buchanan and the deaths of characters like Gatsby, Myrtle, Alec, Tess, Mandras and Carlo with high scoring answers providing plenty of textual evidence to support this.

The social and intellectual differences between characters such as Pelagia, Mandras, Corelli and her father, Tess, Angel and Alec, Gatsby and Daisy were used to at least partially explain why relationships failed. Some perceptive candidates observed that highly dysfunctional relationships such as that between Tom and Daisy could be said to succeed because they last and because as *two careless people* they have much in common.

The social contexts are mostly used well although there is some confusion over which wars are which when dealing with the novels. The world of the American Dream, the Jazz Age, boot legging and the Roaring Twenties were attached to many discussions with generally little evidence of developed understanding, and the material preoccupations of Daisy tended to be limited to her appreciation of Gatsby's silk shirts. Some valid biographical links with Fitzgerald's relationship with Zelda were also mentioned.

The worlds in which gay orientation was taboo featured in many discussions of the presentation of Carlo, Nick Carraway and the poems of Katherine Philips.

The hypocrisy of the values and morals of Victorian England and how they had an effect on key scenes in *Tess* tended to be handled with some sensitivity.

All of the texts provided plenty of ammunition for those who wished to draw attention to the highly sexist worlds in which they were produced.

In summary, good marks on AOs 3 and 4 can be achieved if the dysfunctional relationships can be explained by the repressive and hypocritical worlds in which they are set.

A number of candidates referred to named critics when offering diversity of responses and this was especially marked with relation to *Rapture*. These were fairly limited in number but at the least the awareness was there. Examiners saw some evaluative use of critical opinions.

A long extract from a good answer to show detailed analysis and sound comparisons.  
The essay scored AO1: 9; AO2: 9; AO3: 17; AO4: 16 (51/60).

One element in all three texts that leads to failed and dysfunctional relationships is the idealisation of love. In 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' this is shown explicitly through Tess and Angel's relationship: ~~The~~ Angel ~~the~~ idealises Tess as the "visionary essence of women" and calls her "Annetis, Demeter": ~~the~~ by ~~calling her the~~ referring to her as the Greek goddess of chastity he shows his pure vision of her and the irony is that she does not understand this. The danger of ~~both sides of her~~ this idealised view of her is shown when she confesses to him her relationship with Alec and he claims "the woman [he has] been loving is not [Tess]" but "another woman in [her] form". Structurally this extract is important as it comes during their dual confession; Angel has just confessed to much the same thing as Tess but cannot accept what she tells him in return, which not only shows how idealisation leads to a dysfunctional relationship but could be interpreted as a comment from Hardy on gender and social inequality during the Victorian age in which he was writing, as while ~~the~~ Angel ~~the~~ faces no retribution for his act of 'impurity', Tess' ~~life~~ tragic life is effectively shaped by it.

The danger of idealised love is similarly shown to cause tragedy through ~~the~~ dysfunctional relationships in 'The Great Gatsby'; Gatsby idealises Daisy as the fulfilment of his American Dream, but Fitzgerald uses her inevitable falling short of the "colossal vitality of his illusion" to comment on the futility of the American Dream - the concept that anyone could succeed if they worked hard enough -

and Gatsby's death to show the inevitable collapse of the consumerism of the Golden 20's during the Boom of Wall Street. The link between the two is explicitly shown is Gatsby's idealisation of Daisy's "voice full of money", showing his aspiration to attain her merely as another part of his wealth. However, this metaphor is ironic, as it is Daisy's "money" that keeps them apart, showing the shallow nature of the society Fitzgerald depicts. A similar idealisation is depicted in Carol Ann Duffy's anthology 'Rapture', particularly in the poem 'Treasure' which idealises the speaker's lover to the point of objectifying them, similarly to Daisy in 'Gatsby', by their monetary value, as the narrative voice describes "the weight of your gold head on my numb arm". Alternatively, this ~~could~~ metaphor could be used to show the value of love to the speaker; however, as in the other texts, this idealisation is shown to be flawed, foreshadowing a negative ending. Arguably the lover turning the speaker's arm "numb" could show the pain her love causes her, and this is supported by "the sparkling fools gold of your lies"; although the ~~loves~~ speaker seems to even <sup>be</sup> ~~long~~ idealising the lover's flaws, "fools' gold" has no real value, and this ends the poem on an ominous ~~poem~~ note, suggesting her idealisation is flawed and will cause further pain. ~~The~~ The idealisation of love is

shown in all three texts to lead to disappointment and inevitable pain, but the writers use this to create dysfunctional relationships which create the most interest for the reader due to the urge to read on to discover the characters' true values.



**ResultsPlus**  
**Examiner Comments**

There is good focus on the topic, sound textual knowledge, close textual references, awareness of contexts and control of a discussion handling three texts confidently.

Contextually even though Duffy and Fitzgerald are from different time periods, Fitzgerald in the early Jazz age where prohibition was introduced so there was lots of illegal partying and drinking going on and everything was glamorous once he had earned his money. And Duffy has more of a modern day time period. Putting this aside both story lines are very similar in the way they are personal to the author themselves. This could also be true for John Donne and his poem 'A nocturnal upon St. Lucy's day, being the shortest day,' this is linked to the death of his wife Anne Donne and how he is nothing without her. So with each author although there is no evidence the stories themselves are about the authors contextually it suggests this and Duffy quotes 'I don't want my poems to be just about me as I want everyone to be able to relate with them.'



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

This candidate makes a straightforward attempt to contextualise and make links between texts. The actual references to specific details are not really there, however.

This essay scored AO1: 5; AO2: 6; AO3: 10; AO4: 10 (31/60).



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Make links but be as precise as you can in your use of the texts referred to.

## **Question 4 (a)**

Identifying Self is increasing in popularity and we were delighted to see many positive responses to all of the set texts with some especially interesting answers on the novels, which provide plenty of opportunity for links with each other and with the poetry. Collins seems to have increased in popularity this year and we saw some quite detailed engagement with a wide range of his poems.

Candidates found plenty of opportunity in their chosen texts to explore the narrative trickery of each of the novelists and the range of voices they employ, together with the voices to be found in Billy Collins' poetry as well as that of the Wife of Bath. We saw rather fewer answers on Grace Nichols this time. There was some effective use of contexts to explore the diversity of responses to the wife in medieval and modern times with exploration of her credibility through her self-presentation in both prologue and tale.

There were interesting explorations of the narrative voices of Pip, Pi and Ruby. The contrasts between the voice of the child and the older narrator looking back on earlier events was often dealt with sensitively and the incredible nature of what Ruby says she can remember from the time of her conception and what Pi says he experienced at sea were well managed.

We find far fewer references to named critics in this section, although modern critics of Chaucer are cited on occasion. Contexts are adequately handled on the whole with some good links between Chaucer's period and our own and a good awareness of the world from which Ruby comes, going back to earlier generations but also focusing on what the 1950s was like, especially for women. Dickens was rather more uncertainly handled with general comments on the Victorian era and social class at that time. There certainly needs to be more awareness of the period of Pip's childhood, which seems to have been the regency period, and the distance from the time of writing, more than thirty years later. The gap between the older Pip and his younger self was better managed.

This is the opening paragraph from a fairly weak response.

The essay scored A01: 5; A02: 5; A03: 7; A04: 8 (25/60).

I believe this statement to a certain extent. I believe that the reliability of the characters is a huge factor in the reader's enjoyment of the novels or poems. I will be researching three texts: "Great Expectations", "Behind the scenes at the museum" and "The wife of Bath's tale" and prologue, and will use them to <sup>support</sup> ~~display~~ my argument.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Perhaps a less than inspirational opening.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Don't give away what you think in your opening remark. Find a subtler way of saying what you intend to do, or just do it!

Spell key words correctly.

In the novel "Great Expectations" by Charles Dickens the narrative voice, and main character of Pips' situation ~~could~~ is a reason why he may be unreliable. Pip began his life ~~spent~~ living in the Marshes with his sister, and her husband Joe. Here he was "brought... up by hand", literally.

His sister was very strict, and used the "Tickler" as a form of punishment. Pip grew up idolising his sister's husband, Joe and had the dream of joining him to become a blacksmith. But Pips' life took a complete turn when he found out he had a benefactor. Pips' social class completely changed, he went from being a poor village boy to being a "gentleman". Great Expectations was written in the 1860's, ~~it~~ at this time it was very difficult, and unusual for someone to change social class.

Because, Pips' social class was changing and he was trying to make his way up in the world he may be unreliable, as he is trying to impress, and may say or do anything to do so.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Following on from the previous clip, the same candidate tries to explore narrative voice and contexts. There is some tendency to narrate but, although there is clear textual knowledge with good illustrations, the argument does not really develop.

Both Kate Atkinson and Chaucer make use of intertextual references ~~in order to~~ for different effects. Chaucer's use of the Bible throughout exemplifies ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> importance of ~~showing~~ religion during the period in which

it was written, as well as further showing the unreliability of the wife, who frequently misquotes it ~~and~~ ironically and manipulates scripture: "What that he mente thereby, I kan nat seyn", which evokes humour ~~and~~ and satiric treatment of the wife to a modern audience. However, to a Chaucerian reader, the wife (and Chaucer himself) may have been heavily criticised for the apparent scriptural authenticity of a "Somdel deef woman, and menepre the ~~wife~~ wife would not have been appreciated in the patriarchal society of Middle England. Therefore it becomes clear that believing a narrator, particularly when religion is discussed, was important, but ~~the~~ less important ~~than~~ than the story itself, proven by the longevity of the Canterbury Tales.

Kate Atkinson's use of intertextuality serves ~~the purpose of~~ several purposes. Fundamentally, it creates a 'realism' to Behind the Scenes with the elements of social documentary, and thus makes the reader trust Ruby even more, as 'real

life' references are made to novels such as Great Expectations, Dracula and Daphne de Maurier's 'Rebecca', as well as popular culture references such as 'tomorrow, 8th January, is Elvis's birthday'. Atkinson litters the text with historical references to major world-changing events such as the First and Second World Wars, The Cold War, the assassination of President Kennedy and the first man on the moon, furthering the idea that she intertwines ~~the~~ fact with fiction in order to deceive the reader into believing Ruby. This is shown by ~~how~~ ~~she~~ the way in which these historical events are expressed in the novel, from the very first chapter:

"Guy Fawkes was born here, Dick Turpin was hung a few streets away and Robinson Crusoe, that other great hero, is also a native son of this city."

~~The~~ Ruby's silence that follows, "Who is to say which of these is real and which a fiction?" is a theme that permeates the entire novel, ~~and~~ with the stories of fictional characters such as that of Jack and the dogs during WWI, become more important than the actual event, a clever deception of Atkinson's that makes the characters appear real and believable.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This quite long extract shows some sound use of links between texts and awareness of contexts.

The essay scored AO1: 7; AO2: 8; AO3: 13; AO4: 14 (42/60).

## Question 4 (b)

There was no shortage of examples of *human failings* for candidates to discuss but the key discriminator was the ability to show how they were depicted in the texts. The notion of *attracted* was often a link to some strong personal responses to presentation of character. The genre of the *bildungsroman* had clearly provided the focus for much of the teaching on the novels and on the whole it was a useful concept which was handled quite well by many candidates. Dickens' characters, Pip and his treatment of Joe and Magwitch, Miss Havisham and her treatment of Pip and Estella, Mrs Joe's abuse of Pip contrasted with the failures of most of Atkinson's adult characters to cope with their roles as parents or women in a variety of social and historical contexts. Bunty's failure as a parent was often dealt with quite sympathetically; she was often seen as a victim of the circumstances she found herself in as opposed to Chaucer's Alison who was seen as exploitative and dishonest as much as a proto-feminist, by the standards of today as much as those of the fourteenth century. Some very strong responses to the roles of women in particular provided much refreshing reading for the examiners. When candidates did find links between the texts they were often highly perceptive.

In their seminal works of literature, Geoffrey Chaucer's c.1380 poem, *The Wife of Bath* and Kate Atkinson's 1995 novel *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* convey how the reader is arguably attracted to the human failings in these works of literature. This is highlighted by their protagonists Alison and Ruby through the theme of relationship, death and <sup>beliefs</sup> hope. However, it is also arguable that it is human success that also attract readers. This is made most notable in Yann Marel's 2001 modern novel, *Life of Pi*.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Here is a sound and well-focused introduction.

This essay scored AO1: 8; AO2: 8; AO3: 14; AO4: 13 (43/60).

(Chaucer)

emphasises the 'wyf's' controversial beliefs <sup>over men</sup> ~~of that~~ 'experiences' in the medieval period that 'experience, though born amcraitee'. This declarative statement conveys Miroun's failing to respect men. In the fourteenth century, women were dominated by a patriarchal society and as <sup>Valerie</sup> ~~Fatherine~~ <sup>Allen</sup> ~~Martin~~ notes 'women were often seen as second class citizens'. Thus, to a fourteenth century 'gentilissime' the wife of Bath's statements would be seen as ridiculous <sup>as only men were educated and thus she was offending them.</sup>. Arguably, for a modern reader they may find the 'wyf's' failure to understand societal principles comical, yet they would feel sympathetic towards her as she would have been ridiculed.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The same candidate makes good use of the fourteenth century context.

Within both ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> Atkinson's bildungsroman style novel 'Behind the Scenes at the Museum' and Grace Nichols' eponymous ~~poetic~~ poetic collection 'The fat Black woman's Poems', it is evident that both texts use examples of how humans both fail in life, and ~~succeed~~ succeed. Atkinson uses her alternating chapter / footnote structure to convey the failings of her characters Alice, ~~and~~ and Nell, but also the successes of her characters ~~the~~ Patricia, Lucy-vida, and her main protagonist Ruby. Similarly, Nichols uses her characters in her poems 'wakepot', ~~the~~ and 'Love Act' from her section 'I's a long memory'd woman', ~~the~~ ~~poem~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~collection~~ 'Island Man' from 'In spite of ourselves', and 'The fat Black woman goes shopping' from the collection 'The fat Black woman's Poems'. Personally, I feel that whilst human failings do attract us as modern readers today, it is actually human successes and the cliché 'happy ending' that most ~~engage~~ engage us with a text.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

Another sound introduction, on this occasion comparing a novel and a volume of poetry. There is a valid personal response at the end of the paragraph.

The essay scored AO1: 9; AO2: 9; AO3: 16; AO4: 16 (50/60).

### Question 5 (a)

Examiners did not see many responses to this question but *Small Island* in particular has been well written about. Some responses were seen that dealt with *Reef* and Chaucer. There was some solid textual knowledge although in weaker answers of the two concepts in the question, character was dealt with more confidently than language. Higher band answers did deal successfully with the opposition presented in the question.

### Question 5 (b)

Examiners saw good understanding of character and contexts when dealing with *Small Island* and *The Final Passage* with detailed answers from those who tackled *Reef*. With regards to the poetry, Chaucer was dealt with more successfully than the other poets.

### Question 6 (a)

All the texts in this section were covered in the candidates' work and even *Legion* has received some attention from a small band of centres. There was plenty of graphic illustration of *horrors and suffering*, rather less on *emotional response*. A lot of lower level answers tended to tackle each text in turn which, combined with a narrative approach, prevented access to the higher mark bands. The wider contextual levels of the effects of war on readers then and now led to a range of interesting observations. Comparisons between the fictionalised versions of Owen and Sassoon in *The Ghost Road* and their real selves as evidenced in the poems, demonstrated how the distance of time has influenced our responses to war. Many quite rightly made the point that the immediacy of the World War One poems, which were often not published until after the war, were regarded as unpleasant reminders of what was felt to be better forgotten. The effects on non-combatants, such as the women in *The Ghost Road* and *Spies*, is often striking, and met with sensitive responses. Alison Fell's take on the end of World War Two was a popular choice from later poems and the range of conflicts covered stretched from the ancient conflicts revisited by Seamus Heaney and Dorothy Parker to Vietnam and Cambodia in more modern times. In fact it was a pleasure to read answers that covered poems from across the anthologies as well as the inevitably popular ones. It was fascinating to observe Yeats' response to war and the links made with such different writers as Holub and Levertov. Responses have inevitably been coloured by the centenary of World War One and the D Day commemorations on the day of the exam. Knowledge of *The Kite Runner* is often very uneven. Many candidates refer to a limited number of incidents from the novel although more accomplished ones do deal with the narrator's return to Afghanistan and to link this, with varying degrees of effectiveness to Hosseini's own experience as an exile.

At time of war, post traumatic stress disorder was a taboo subject and often referred to as cowardice. Yet in this novel there are many cases of <sup>poor</sup> mental health ~~to~~ seen by the reader and not always in the soldiers at the front. Maffet, one of the soldiers can be seen to be suffering paralysis from the mental effect of war. "He'd been unable to

walk for more than three months, an unusually long time for hysterical paralysis to persist". Although the patient is not suffering physically we see how his body has shut down due to mental suffering, which allows the reader to come to terms with the varying effects of war.

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini reveals how suffering can be seen as a result of conflict and not always from conflict itself. It is set in a time of conflict in Afghanistan and ~~the~~ political unrest. From this we see how the young and innocent can suffer. The reader is presented with horrifying images in a key part of the novel. Hassan, Amir's longest and closest friend is subject to ~~a~~ brutal rape. "I pretended I hadn't seen the dark stain in the seat of his pants". This horrific vivid imagery allows the reader to see the physical pain felt. From this the reader is devastated that someone so innocent has undergone such a horrific ordeal so early on in his life.



**ResultsPlus**  
**Examiner Comments**

Here is a straightforward attempt to make points supported by valid illustrations from the texts. There is an implicit sense of contexts, both of the time of *The Ghost Road*'s setting and of its writing. There is a similar approach to the subsequent section on *The Kite Runner*, but not much comparison.

This essay scored AO1: 5; AO2: 6; AO3: 7; AO4: 9 (27/60).

Justly, as the reader, we must remember that each war literature written by Owen, Hosseini and Barker, were written in different eras, and from this, as a modern reader we have gained distance from the first world war, one hundred years previous, and the horror conveyed by Owen provokes us less emotionally, than Barker's writing, as the language is more explicit and modern. However, from reading modern war literature, we lose the authenticity of the writing that distinguishes current war literature and achieve placing the reader in the current proceedings of the action. Similarly to this, Hosseini writes of the Afghanistan war (1979) which is, at present, in a current state of war, and through the sufferings Hosseini displays, would provoke his readers to pity and help those suffering in the current state of war.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This paragraph contains a neat overview, well focused on the topic.

The essay scored AO1: 9; AO2: 9; AO3: 18; AO4: 18 (54/60).

To begin with, Barker aims to shock her audience through the characters of Hansbeck and Hallet and the physical and psychological effects the soldiers received in the 'bloodiest century in history' according to Lynda Prescott. On Hopper ~~to~~ Hansbeck's line 'You know, I can tell the smell isn't real, because I can still smell it', this suggests how Barker shows her readers that the soldiers are unable to escape the horrors of the war, even when away from the war. The use of the third person narrative distances the reader, but however also prepares them from the physical effect Hallet receives in chapter thirteen. 'Brain exposed, a lot of blood... One eye gone' the violent imagery is more shocking for the reader as this first person ~~person~~ narration is harshly colloquial and aggressively blunt, which displays how he is emotionally engaged to the horror of war. In contrast the audience would have been shocked by this blunt narration and would have educated the 1995 readers to the true horrors of war. Similarly to Hallet, the last surviving World War One soldier, Harry Patch, thought that the war wasn't 'worth one life' which correlates with Hallet's view of 'Shot violet' meaning 'it's not worth it'. Barker presents the two contrasting views of the war through Hallet and Hallet's father, 'Major Hallet' as he responds with 'Oh, it is worth it, it is', which reveals the pro-war society that Wilfred Owen objected to, as his poem 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' was partly a response to Jessie Pope's highly jingoistic poem 'Who's up for the game?'



## ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

In this extract from the same essay there is a confident use of text, good use of literary language and a neat link between novel and poem at the end of the paragraph.

## Question 6 (b)

Much of what has been said above also applies to the (b) question in terms of choice of texts and the kinds of links that candidates made. Examiners found clear engagement with the ideas of *challenges* and *respond sympathetically* so there was much exploration of the psychological effects of warfare from *The Ghost Road* and *Spies* in particular, as well as a number of the poems. There were good comments on the roles played by women as well as the effects on those who had experienced conflict at first hand. The ways in which experiences are presented in a literary way were often used by high achieving candidates; Prior's use of the epistolary form, the childhood viewpoint of Stephen, the use of swearing in *American Football*, the graphic language of Owen, the comic/satirical tone of Sassoon, the distanced point of view of later writers dealing with World War One such as Hughes and Larkin all found sympathetic responses.

As with the (a) question, comparisons between the texts varied enormously. Discussion of childhood experiences in *The Kite Runner* and *Spies* was generally well managed and often linked to the narrators' older selves revisiting experiences and places from the past. There were plenty of opportunities to compare the nature of experiences from combatants, whether real or fictional, and Owen, Sassoon and Douglas were good exemplars of the former and Hallet, Prior and Uncle Peter of the latter.

The ways in which contexts were used often invoked the 2014 reader dealing with significant anniversaries from both world wars, as well as the distance of the writer from the events being depicted. The danger is to imagine what, say, a 1918 reader might have made of texts which either had not yet been written or not yet published. Contexts of the writers' own circumstances were often well used. Examples included Owen's own *Dulce et Decorum Est* as a response to Jessie Pope as well as Horace, and his correspondence with his mother. Khaled Hosseini's attitude to the wars in Afghanistan, the biographical links to Frayn's own experiences in war time, Dr Rivers' attitude to war was based on his experiences in Melanesia (based on a real character of course) were other very appropriate references.

Siegfried Sassoon is a perfect example of an effective writer that challenges the reader to feel sympathy to the events of war. 'I knew a simple soldier boy who grinned at life in empty joy.' The juxtaposition of empty joy coupled with the adjective 'simple' connote the innocence and naivety of the ~~so~~ type of soldiers entering the war. Sassoon destroys this symbol of innocence and hope: 'he put a ~~a~~ bullet through his brain.' Here, the plosive sounds create ~~impact~~ the sound of the violence of war and gun warfare. The ~~descri~~ destruction of the soldier symbolising ~~everythi~~ millions of young, naive men joining the war under the false impression of propaganda at the time within this poem shows his intention to encourage readers to sympathise with ~~the~~ those involved in war. His writing is ~~the~~ unemotional and brutally honest, much like Pat Barker which is why they work in perfect harmony together and ~~if~~ Sassoon's influence is ~~no~~.

(\*) in his poem *Suicide in the Trenches*

evident in Barker's honest style of prose. Barker almost mirrors the 'simple soldier boy' in Sassoon's poem in her creation of Hallet: 'We ~~to~~ are fighting for the legitimate interests of our own country... This is still a just war.' ~~This~~ <sup>She</sup> brilliantly ~~demonstrates~~ creates an extended version of Sassoon's soldier in that Hallet is the epitome of a victim of propaganda and the widespread faith ~~at~~ that it was a 'just war'. This is supported by Bertrand ~~Bernal~~ Russell's quote: 'people would rather die than think.' ~~Sassoon and~~ Barker is again, evidently similar to Sassoon in that she also ~~destroyed~~ <sup>brutally</sup> ~~brutally~~ <sup>violently</sup> destroyed the symbol of innocence & in 'putting a bullet through his brain' and completely destroying the face of innocent youth: 'it's easier to forget. I run the ball of my thumb against the two first fingers of my right hand where a gob of Hallet's brain was.'



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This candidate makes good links between texts. There is detailed discussion of language and tone and good awareness of contexts. The essay scored AO1: 9; AO2: 8; AO3: 16; AO4: 17 (50/60).

## **Paper Summary**

In order to improve performance candidates should:

- Answer relevantly
- Hit the relevant assessment objectives
- Write clearly, accurately, legibly and in an appropriately literary style
- Quote briefly when illustrating points
- Make references to other readers and contexts to support the argument
- Answer the question on the books that have been studied
- Choose the question that will enable you to show your knowledge most effectively.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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