



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced
Subsidiary in English Literature (8ET0)
Paper 1: Poetry and Drama

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Introduction

It is clear to see that teachers and students have prepared very well for this examination and the requirements of the specification. Students' responses were interesting to read, and the large majority of students were able to address all the assessment objectives and produce thoughtful and insightful essays, showing clear engagement with the texts, their contexts, and writers' ideas. Teachers' experience in preparing students successfully for this exam is clear, and the detailed and well-argued responses produced by students show the fruits of that thorough preparation and expertise.

Section A

In Section A, the questions present candidates with a named poem from the anthology, and they must then select a suitable poem from the other anthology poems they have studied, to enable AO4 comparison, and to enable them to answer the question. The candidates have a choice of two questions, with different named poems.

For both questions, candidates largely chose very appropriate poems for comparison, enabling a range of points to be made in relation to the question focus. Where this was less successful, this was because that choice did not enable an exploration of the ideas in the question, in this case ideas about the modern world, or the presentation of gender.

The most successful responses displayed a sustained comparison anchored by conceptualised ideas, often presented through a confident thesis at the start of the response, and then consistently developed throughout the essay. This the thematic, ideas-driven comparison, where writers' methods were considered in the light of a central concept, was often more effective than responses which focussed on poetic devices as a driver for the response. Writing about methods in isolation from the question or the ideas in the texts is a less-successful approach, and can lead to surface readings of the texts.

Section B

For Section B of the exam, students choose between two questions on their set drama text. The assessment objectives assess students' knowledge of the text and use of references, their analysis of writer's methods, contextual knowledge in relation to the text, and interpretations of the text. The question and critical statement provide a steer to all of the assessment objectives, and should be used by candidates to support their formulation of a response to the task.

The vast majority of students referred to the statement in their response, and used it to support their interpretations of the text; although it is not

compulsory for students to write about the statement, or the ideas it contains, the support it offers can be a useful steer, reminding students of the need to think critically and interpretatively about the text in relation to the task. Less successful responses referred only to the ideas within the critical statement and did not address the question focus itself, which led to a narrower, more limited essay which failed to fully engage with the task.

In relation to AO1, many students displayed a confident knowledge of the text, demonstrating this through appropriate and frequent use of textual references. Direct quotations were used to exemplify candidates' analysis of writer's methods and explorations of interpretations, and to draw together the text and its contexts. The choice of reference is crucial to a successful response, and the majority of candidates utilised well-selected references to support their points and add rigour to their arguments. Responses with fewer references were less convincing, as evidencing argument is a key part of literary studies. Candidates' use of examples – textual references – is a discriminating factor when awarding marks for AO1, and also impacts how convincingly students have addressed the other AOs.

AO1 also addresses the style and accuracy of responses, and many candidates wrote accurately and utilised an academic style. It is worth noting that unclear expression, or writing containing considerable errors, is limiting in all areas of the marking grid, as it can be difficult for examiners to reward marks when ideas and arguments are unclear and difficult to follow. It was pleasing to see that many students used their exam timings strategically and made a plan before writing their responses; this can help to clarify the line of argument a student takes, and support in the coherence and clarity of responses.

For AO2, students are assessed on their analysis of writer's craft, and how the writers use methods to convey ideas and create meanings. In the lower bands of the mark scheme, this often looks like word-level analysis, though more confident and perceptive responses take a broader approach, considering writer's craft in a more sophisticated and often original way. It is important that these methods are not considered in isolation, but are explored in relation to the meanings and ideas conveyed through the text; students in Level 4 or above often intertwine this more nuanced analysis with critical interpretations of the text, which can be a successful approach to both AO2 and AO5.

AO3 addressed candidates' handling of contexts in relation to the text and the task. Less successful approaches to this are generalised contextual points, often biographical or historical in nature, with little linking to the text or the writer's ideas. Sweeping generalisations regarding historical or authorial context lack nuance and are often so broad as to be inaccurate, and this

undermines the credibility and effectiveness of responses. Where context is addressed successfully, it is specific, accurate, and precise, and is closely and explicitly linked to the text and the task. There were some very interesting and effective discussions of specific dramatic and literary contexts linked to the texts, such as Williams' use of plastic theatre, and Wilde's satirising of Victorian society. These were often handled deftly and confidently without lengthy explanations of their definitions, and were exemplified by specific references to the text.

Finally, the assessment of AO5 looks for interpretations of the text, with students often utilising critical perspectives to achieve this. Many responses integrated quotations from specific critics, and although this is not a requirement, they can serve to add substance to candidates' arguments if explored and evaluated effectively. Examiners also saw students clearly signposting their interpretations of the texts, which was helpful, and it was pleasing to see students explore interpretations in detail to demonstrate clear understanding of ideas and meanings.

Question 1

On the whole, candidates responded well to the poetry task. Students were asked to compare ideas about how the modern world is presented in Ciaran O'Driscoll's *Please Hold* and another poem of their choice - Turnbull's *Ode on a Grayson Perry Urn* was a popular pairing. The majority of students were able to apply confident analysis of how meanings were shaped and of stylistic analysis. Many responses utilised comparisons of tone, patterns of language, and formal elements. Ideas about technology were frequently addressed, with most candidates considering the presentation of a negative perspective on humanity's increasing reliance on technology and dehumanisation in *Please Hold*. There were relatively few examples of generalised responses, and at the higher end, candidates presented some original ideas about the ways in which meanings were shaped.

Question 2

This question asked candidates to compare how ideas about gender were presented in *Chainsaw Versus the Pampas Grass* by Simon Armitage and one other poem of their choice, and was significantly more popular than the first question. A significant number of students compared with Patience Agbabi's *Eat Me*, whilst Ford's *Giuseppe*, Feaver's *The Gun*, and Tishani Doshi's *The Deliverer* were also popular choices.

Many candidates approached gender as a social construct, considering stereotypical presentations of masculinity and femininity, and how these were challenged or reinforced through the text. There were many interesting perspectives on patriarchal power and misogyny from candidates, particularly in relation to 'Eat Me' and Chainsaw, with thoughtful analysis of their reversal of power dynamics in the endings of the poems. Although context is not specifically assessed in this part of the exam, there was merit in students' linking of the ideas in the poems to wider societal gender dynamics. Responses to Giuseppe were able to address the ambiguity to varying degrees of success and engaged with the blurring of 'she'/'it'. The oppression of women was a consistently addressed theme, with responses on 'The Deliverer' in particular focussing on this element of the texts.

There were a range of approaches to analysing poetic craft, and generally a good awareness of poetic form and how poets shape meanings and convey ideas through their choices. In some cases, these were generic and simplistically dealt with, with responses at Level 4 and above more successfully integrating ideas and methods to explore presentations of ideas about gender.

~~Both~~ In the heart of both "chainsaw versus the pampas grass" and "The gun", the presentation of gender plays a key role in both novels. In "chainsaw versus the pampas grass" Armitage plays on gender dynamics through his personification of the chainsaw and the grass, and similarly in "the Gun" Feaver personifies the gun.

Both poets utilise ~~the~~ extended metaphors of weapons throughout their poems in order to illustrate gender roles. ~~Armitage~~ In "chainsaw versus the pampas grass", Armitage uses phallic imagery to describe the chainsaw, and describes it in ways that connote stereotypically masculine traits, for instance he states the chainsaw ~~back~~ ~~a "bloody desire" for the "if"~~ "knocked back a quarter-pint of engine oil" and "juices ran from it's joints and threads". This personification of the chainsaw provokes ~~a~~ ~~feather~~ ideas of traditionally masculine activities, and creates a brutish and ~~regret~~ angry tone. This tone is reinforced through the ~~am~~iteration of the harsh "j" sounds, ^{as} ~~and~~ the words spoken out loud would sound emphasised and rogeful. Similarly in "the Gun" Feaver personifies

the gun in stereotypically masculine ways, claiming it "juts over the edge" and "casts a grey shadow on the green-checked cloth". The metaphor of the gun's "grey shadow" provokes a sense ~~that~~ of foreboding, as we suspect something ~~negative~~ harmful is awaiting. Moreover, the juxtaposition of this with the "green checked cloth" suggests that this masculine presence has entered the domestic sphere of the house, which is reinforced by Feather's use of the *f* verb "jut", which ~~as~~ makes the gun appear forceful and unwanted.

Both poets also demonstrate the ways in which the weapons challenge their environments, however the outcomes of these contrast heavily. In "chainsaw versus the pampass grass" Armitage states that the chainsaw had a "bloody desire" for the "flesh of the face and the bones underneath". The poet's use of the fricative "f" sounds creates an almost spitting rage, and demonstrates the chainsaw's apparent anger and brutality. We discover that this rage is directed towards the pampass grass, which has "ludicrous feathers and plumes, ..., taking the warmth and light". These descriptions of the grass connote traditionally feminine traits, as Armitage also claims it "suns itself" with "cushions and

her partner as the "king of death" who "stalked out of winter woods". These descriptions of the masculine figure in the poem ~~also~~ illustrate the fact that the narrator praises (and perhaps even worships) him for bringing the gun into their home, where the couple are catapulted back into a far more traditional relationship. The narrator claims she "joins in with the cooking and slicing", as their dynamic completely changes. The ~~unusually~~ unusualness and transgressive nature within this relationship is reinforced through Feather's use of enjambment, as one line crosses over onto the next, their relationship also crosses usual boundaries. However, it is apparent that the gun has impacted their relationship by ~~decreasing~~ bringing the couple closer together, whereas in "chainsaw versus the pampas grass" the chainsaw's rage only draws the couple further apart.

Commentary:

This is part of a low Level 4 response. This response begins with a strong, confident opening, establishing a secure overview of the ideas in the poems. The language and phrasing is mostly secure, '...that connote stereotypically masculine traits...', with only occasional lapses. Examples used are clear and relevant, such as the references to the 'grey shadows' and 'green-checked cloth' on page 6. Some of the analysis is a little undeveloped, such as the comments on alliteration on page 5, and the reference to enjambment towards the end. Due to this, the script stays at the bottom of Level 4.

Advice:

Adopting a conceptual framework, such as deconstructing the question into key elements, frequently proves effective for a comparative analysis in Section A. This method typically enhances the focus and conciseness of paragraphs, thereby allowing for an essay with a more coherent and structured composition.

As a contrast, here is another response with much tighter and fluent focus on the conceptualised ideas in the text:

Gender is an idea explored in both Armitage's "Chainsaw vs the Pampas Grass" and Feeney's "The Gun" to convey ideas of the struggle between man and nature as well as gender roles in society. Both poets use language techniques to convey to the audience the parallels between man made machinery's conflict with nature and hypermasculine traits contrasting with feminine culture. Overall this essay will explore how the theme of gender is portrayed by both poets.

In "Chainsaw versus the Pampas Grass" Armitage ~~conveys~~ illustrates hypermasculinity through personification of the chainsaw. Armitage conveys the masculine rage of the chainsaw, "grinding its teeth in a plastic sheen" and knocking back, "a quarter pint of engine oil". The stereotypically masculine image of the chainsaw insinuates the intrinsic link between hypermasculine culture and violence. The present participle verb "grinding" implies the predatory and violent nature of hypermasculinity, the chainsaw is personified as having an innate craving for violence and destruction. Furthermore, the ^{verb} ~~verb~~ "knocked" exemplifies the aggression and all-consuming destruction of man-made machinery. Through the masculine and violent presentation of the

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typically effeminate motifs of "jewellery, ^{or} ~~and~~ hair" show that the machismo character's violent urges are directed at the feminine. The ~~new~~ delicate syllables of 'jewellery' contrast with the disyllables or 'tangle', conveying to the reader the harshness and friction between masculine violence and ~~effeminate~~ feminine objects. This exemplifies Armitage's exploration of gender within the poem as a harbinger of conflict due to the masculine character's natural proclivity for violence.

Similarly in ~~the poem~~ 'The Gun' the male figure is seen as being satisfied from violence as his character becomes consumed by the hunt. Fewer describe the overconsumption and obsession the male figure ~~pro~~ ~~possessed~~ ~~possessed~~ when she describes the "bridge fills" with creatures that have run and "flown". The alliteration of 'bridge fills' further illustrates the ~~concomitant~~ ^{deliberate} destruction of the destruction caused by the man and his gun. Furthermore, the past tense verb of 'run' and 'flown' portray the male gender role of hunting and gathering which illustrates to the reader the predatory and animalistic aggression the male figure ~~possessed~~ ~~possessed~~. This draws ~~to~~ ~~to~~ similarity with Armitage's portrayal of the character as both masculinised figures in the poem exclude traits of violence and gaining gratification or pleasure from it.

Commentary:

The conceptualised introduction sets up a comparative focus that was skilfully maintained throughout the response. This is a discriminating and very effective response, that is a pleasure to read. The response is closely focussed on the task, and interweaves a close analysis of vocabulary with other elements of the writers' craft such as imagery and symbolism. Whilst the phrasing slips on occasion, becoming clunky in places and formulaic in transitions between the poems, the quality of the understanding demonstrated, and the sophistication of the argument, means that this response sits at the top of Level 5.

Advice:

Reminding students of the importance of managing their exam timings is important, as top responses read confidently and fluently, therefore proof-reading and editing can aid in the production of a more convincing and effective essay structure.

Question 3**Question 4**

There were no responses on Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs*.

Question 5

Many candidates engaged confidently with the language and contexts of *Doctor Faustus*. In this question, candidates were asked to consider the dramatic presentation of greed in the play. At the lower end of the range, responses looked at the motivations of various characters and how greed might link to ambition.

Within the play, Dr Faustus, Marlowe presents the idea of greed through both Faustus' hubris and excessive pride and his hunger for knowledge. However one could argue that Faustus only sold his soul due to curiosity.

Throughout the play, Marlowe has presented the idea of Faustus' hubris and his excessive pride being the reason for him to sell his soul to the devil. A reader can imply that Marlowe has written a tragedy play meaning that Dr Faustus is a tragic hero with a tragic flaw, with this tragic flaw being his hubris and egotistical nature for if he was to sell his soul, he would 'have them fly to India for ~~gold~~ gold' and ransack the ocean for orient pearl'. This descriptive image suggests that Faustus yearns to be wealthy almost as if he deserves it for his hubris demands it. Furthermore, this idea of greed can also be ~~seen~~ seen later on in the play as Faustus conjures up Helen of Troy whose face 'launched a thousand ships'. During the Elizabethan era, Helen of Troy was seen as the most beautiful woman in the world so the idea that Faustus should be with her can be seen as comedic as he believes he is worthy of her as he now has these supernatural powers due to meddling in the dark arts. This adds evidence to the fact that Faustus would happily sell his soul due to his insatiable greed and therefore he demands everything for he believes himself to be worthy of everything.

Agreeing with the fact that Faustus only sold his soul due to greed. We can insinuate that he did it due to his hunger for knowledge for in the opening ~~soliloquy~~ soliloquy, Faustus asks the

question 'have thou not attain'd that end?' suggesting he knows everything and ~~yearns~~ yearns for more. This hunger and insatiable greed ultimately leads to Faustus selling his soul. During the Elizabethan period, discovery was a newfound thing with Christopher ~~and~~ Columbus only recently discovering America. With this in mind, Faustus also hungers for more knowledge and discovery and therefore sells his soul. However, it could be argued that this is a tragedy play ~~to~~ and therefore Faustus' life has already been mapped out for him. This brings in the idea of free will and pre-destination. During the medieval times, pre-destination was the idea that God has mapped out your life for you. This is reflected in the opening chorus for Faustus 'waxen wings did mount above his reach', ~~the allusion~~ An allusion to the myth of Icarus has been used as it suggests right at the beginning that Faustus 'flew too close to the sun' and therefore a great tragedy will befall him, no matter if it has anything to do ~~with~~ with his insatiable greed or not.

To argue with the statement, a reader may think that greed has not been presented and Faustus is simply curious and this is why he sells his soul. ~~add on to this part~~ This is clearly seen during the middle section of the play for after Faustus sells his soul, him and Mephistophilis travel together for twenty four years. Within these twenty ~~four~~ four years, a viewer can see that ~~they~~ they never use ~~the~~ necromancy and witchcraft for negative purposes, instead they use it to mock the catholic church and other

Commentary:

This is an example of a response which deals with more surface-level, and narrative features of the text in relation to the task, with fewer uses of precise textual evidence to support their arguments. Whilst there is awareness of contexts, literary and historical, these are not closely linked with the text, and are more explanatory in style. As a consequence, the understanding seen, in this section, is more general than clear, although as the essay progresses it does offer more precise and pertinent points, and therefore ends up in Level 3 for both marking grids.

Advice:

Ensure that comments, for example regarding literary context and characterisation, are supported by pertinent textual evidence, and that discussions of contextual significance are linked precisely to the text and rather than narrated or explained to the examiner.

Question 6

A range of approaches was seen on this question on the dramatic presentation of fate in Doctor Faustus. In responses seen, 'fate' was taken as pre-destination and lack of control over outcomes. Better responses looked not only at the themes of fate and hubris, but also at the ways in which elements of Faustus as a tragic hero, or links to secularisation, were communicated.

Within ~~to~~ Dr Faustus, Marlowe presents fate as an omniscient ~~theme over Faustus~~ and omnipotent theme over the character of Faustus. This is further illustrated through presenting Dr Faustus almost as a victim to himself and his own fate throughout the play, as he consistently falls servile to his hubris and lust for power, which then amplifies his demise ~~and fate~~. This theme is further presented through the use of other characters either encouraging or attempting to disconnect Faustus from his inevitable fate of falling victim to his choices and Lucifer. Firstly, Marlowe deploys and makes use of Faustus' hubris and insatiable lust for power to further enhance the dramatic presentation of fate. Within the prologue, Faustus is described to have his "waxen wings mount above his reach". Through this allusion to the story of Icarus, this insinuates and

materialises to the audience the idea that Faustus' fate as already been pre-determined before the start of the play, acting as an ever-present theme that consistently guides Faustus from the beginning. Additionally, this also gives the impression that both Faustus' fate and hubris of excessive pride share common elements, almost as if they are ^{presented to be} the same thing, as Faustus consistently falls victim to both, leading him to his inevitable demise. This can be observed through Faustus' colloquy where he desires "power, of honour, of omnipotence" ~~and~~ insinuating he is almost cursed by his own omnipotent greed and pride, leading the way to his fate. ^{Additionally, this} ~~text~~ is ~~it~~ further strengthened when Faustus "vows to never look at Heaven", displaying ~~him~~ to his personality to share the elements of a tragic hero and make an irreversible action, that will doom himself, and the others around him. Marlowe may have ~~used~~ utilized this to criticise those, who like Faustus, turn away from God; the character of Faustus represents this idea when he turns to Lucifer and "hell" rather than "Heaven" to determine his fate. Furthermore,

Marlowe illustrates the power of God through speech as "Heaven" is ~~consistently~~ consistently has the feature of a capital letter, contrasting to "hell" to further present the dominance and omnipotence of God even in speech. which is also demonstrated through Faustus' fate.

Secondly, through the dramatic presentation of fate, Marlowe deploys other characters within the play to amplify and further illustrate Faustus' fate. This is done through the deployed personality of the Evil Angel, who consistently serves as an extension of Lucifer, and urges Faustus to "think of honour and of wealth". By appealing to the idea of power and material gain, the Evil Angel ~~regularly is regularly displayed to possess power or and dominance over Faustus' choices and actions, further giving the impression Faustus lacks control over his own fate.~~ By appealing to the idea of power and material gain, the Evil Angel is regularly displayed to possess power over Faustus through a commanding tone and dominant presence over ~~Faustus~~^{his} choices. This both gives the impression and insinuates that Faustus lacks control over

signing a waiver to Lucifer. This further demonstrates the omniscient presence of God throughout the play, encouraging Faustus to "repent". Despite this, Faustus continuously ignores the efforts of others, this is also pre-determined in the prologue when he makes the unwavering decision of religion being "too servile", giving the impression he is fated to ignore God from the beginning; contrasting Elizabethan ideals. Additionally, other agents of God are presented in front of Faustus within the play; the Good Angel repeatedly urges Faustus's "Sweet Faustus, [to] think of Heaven, and heavenly things". ~~Despite~~ However, the idea of repentance contrasts Faustus' excessive pride, potentially preventing him from doing so. As well as this, it is insinuated throughout the play, Faustus' ideas of "heavenly things" are those that grant "power", juxtaposing Christian ideals. In contrast to the agents of God, Mephistophilis also attempts to sway Faustus from his fate of serving Lucifer. Marlowe displays Mephistophilis as a contrasting character, as he both serves as an

extension of Lucifer but, also encourages Faustus not to ~~not~~ "bind thy soul". Additionally, he also warns Faustus of "hell... for thou art damne'd", insinuating there is a potential innate want for Faustus not to suffer the same fate as he did. However, in contrast to the efforts, Faustus consistently acts in juxtaposition, serving the Elizabethan idea of predestination. This is portrayed by Marlowe, and is the idea that your fate, similar to Faustus' is unchangeable. Marlowe may have incorporated this in an effort to relate Faustus to the audience. Additionally, it is insinuated that Faustus is unable to recognise the present theme of predestination guiding him, as his character embodies renaissance throughout the play. Marlowe may have deployed this in an effort to create conflict in both an Elizabethan and modern audience's view on Faustus, as we may feel a sense of sympathy for him and his unchangeable pre-determined fate. Or perhaps, a lack of pity as ~~some audience~~ predominantly modern audience members may lack a ~~deep~~ belief

Commentary:

It is clear that this student has a confident knowledge and appreciation of the play, as is seen through the range of examples used and their consistent addressing of the text as a playscript with a sense of Marlowe's purpose. Ideas are presented securely, though are sometimes a little wordy/clunky, with plenty of interpretations, with the handling of Mephistopheles' presentation towards the end of the above extract particularly effective. Context is interwoven, with references to literary and Elizabethan context, although these are rather undeveloped. Consequently the response is a secure, top Level 4 for both marking grids.

Advice:

This is a good example of how to integrate AO3 and AO5 successfully, whilst ensuring they are not prioritised above the other assessment objectives.

Question 7

Very few responses were seen on *The Duchess of Malfi* this series. Question 7 asked students to consider the dramatic presentation of guilt in the play, and candidates demonstrated successful engagement with the play's ideas on this theme.

Question 8

For Question 8, which was the more popular choice of the two, there were some very successful responses addressing the presentation of melancholy and its dramatic function in the play.

Question 9

It was pleasing to see many responses on *The Importance of being Earnest*, and candidates engaged well with the questions on this text. In this question, candidates were asked to explore Wilde's dramatic presentation of stories. Most candidates presented a clear and relevant analysis of the degree to which characters were creating stories about themselves and others, and how behaviours and motifs could be seen to symbolise the restrictions and hypocrisy of Victorian society. Clear links were made with Wilde's other works and wider contexts. Some candidates securely linked concepts of story-telling as deception, with a secure grasp of satire and irony within the play.

Oscar Wilde's farical, societal comedy 'The Importance of being Earnest' (1894) ^{uses} ~~represents~~ superficial characters and scenarios to subvert conventional Victorian ideals through deception and illusion presented in stories. The ~~use of~~ diction and characters in the play are all "Glittering surfaces", as Paglia states. Wilde highlights the false depth in fin de siècle ~~England~~ ~~sup~~ England by masquerading his witty, provocative jabs behind sharp dialogue and jokes in the form of absurd stories.

Wilde presents the character Algernon as a Victorian dandy ~~who~~ too preoccupied with beauty to take anything seriously. When he plays the piano badly it does not matter ^{that} it isn't accurate as ~~he~~ 'anyone can play accurately' and that 'sentiment is my forte'. Wilde is using aestheticism to ~~show~~ portray Algernon's triviality and desire for intrigue rather than the truth. Wilde was taught at Oxford by Walter Pater, ~~the~~ the leading figure in the aesthetics movement. Algernon

uses the imaginary character Bunbury in order to avoid the constraints of Victorian expectations; if it wasn't for Bunbury Algernon would be forced to ~~give up~~ relinquish his dandyism and assume the role of a usual Victorian gentleman. Algernon then takes on the role of Ernest to indulge in even more trickery. Algernon states he 'loves scrapes. They are the only thing that is never serious'. This epigram highlights the staunch morality present in society and inverts the belief of the audience. As a dandy, Algernon pushes back against the rules and reveals the ~~so~~ hypocrisy. Gillespie states "to gain attention - a central aim for the dandy he must disrupt the normal pattern of events". Algernon is a device for ~~dis~~ disruption in the play and rocks ~~off~~ the traditional order upheld by characters like Aunt Augusta. Without his double lives and stories he would not be able to continue his jeering, as he walks a ~~thin~~ ^{very} thin line and must not ~~tread~~ ^{go} too much. Whilst dandies ~~are~~ push back against the rules they ~~also~~ know not to go too far. Algernon ultimately 'killed Bunbury this afternoon', something he swore to never do. The story of lies ends and Algernon satisfies his aunt and marries the wealthy Cecily, conforming to society. Wilde ~~present~~ shows the ~~as aristocratic~~ order ~~as what it was~~ deceit and falsities through the story of Bunbury but simultaneously highlights the rigidity and no escape through a perfectly tied up ending.

Commentary:

In this extract from a much longer response, shows a confident integration of the assessment objectives in relation to the task and the critical quotation. It shows an appreciation of the text's contexts and closely links and interrogates the text, ultimately making this a response just into Level 5.

Advice:

It is always worth reiterating that all the assessment objectives of the paper rely on the candidate supporting their ideas with precise evidence from the text.

Question 10

This question asked students to consider Wilde's dramatic presentation of attitudes towards death. Most candidates explored the theme with appropriate reference to dramatic presentation, with some effective responses to how death was used as a comic device to facilitate the plot. A few less successful answers dealt with a narrow range of examples, limited to Lady Bracknell's sarcastic comments about the improvements of widows.

Question 11**Question 12**

No responses were seen to The Rover.

Question 13

A Streetcar Named Desire remains, the most popular text on this paper. For this question, candidates were asked to explore the dramatic presentation of friendship in the play. Most candidates could present an appropriate analysis of friendships, although a number limited their discussion to the sisters and how they were or were not really friends. At the lower end of the range, candidates presented a general overview of the text and some discussion of Stanley's aggression towards Blanche as a breakdown of a 'friendship'. Better responses considered the role of Eunice and the dynamics between Stanley and Mitch. Some examined how Blanche, as representative of the Old South, was under threat and no longer at home in the New America, and that her isolation and lack of friendships served as a catalyst for her downfall.

There were some interesting responses from candidates presenting analysis of the ways in which Williams' staging emphasised Blanche's transgression of the Kowalski home and an abuse of friendship, and how the remnants of Blanche's failure to form meaningful bonds created the need to appeal to strangers.

Overall, candidates across the performance range are incorporating wider contexts of production and reception, along with critical interpretations, in meaningful ways.

Question 14

This question asked candidates to consider the dramatic presentation of beauty in the text, and was significantly the most popular question on the paper.

Many candidates responded to the ways in which characters could be strong or beautiful, with less secure responses using this as a frame to present a narrative summary of Blanche's fragile beauty and the relationship between the exposure of her lies and her mental deterioration. Better responses presented an analysis of a range of characters as well as dramatic methods, and an exploration of the concept of beauty and what this might mean to contemporary audiences.

I mostly agree with the quote 'in the world of the play, men must be strong and women must be beautiful'.

In A Streetcar Named Desire, I feel that Williams presents the idea of beauty and the importance of beauty through Blanche and highlight the importance and sentiment of being strong through Stanley.

Throughout the play, Blanche stresses the importance of her looking good. In scene one she says to Stella, 'don't you look at me, Stella, no, no, no, not till later, not till I've bathed and rested!' which highlights the idea that she feels as though she has to look perfect all of the time.

It is clear that Blanche feels insecure when she does not feel like she looks beautiful. Overall, Blanche obsesses with the idea of beauty, whether that be with jewellery and clothes, her looks or her surround-

ings. She tells Stella to 'open your pretty mouth' and continues to remind Stella that she feels unclean which in turn, means she feels unattractive. '... and hot and tired and dirty!' Throughout the play, Blanche Bather is always telling us that she finds comfort and beauty with being clean. Blanche also finds a need for people to comment (nicely) on her appearance 'You haven't said a word about my appearance'. Which ~~high~~ amplifies the idea that she is truly insecure and longs ~~for~~ to like herself. In 'A Street car named Desire', Blanche is the epitome of what it means to be beautiful and the hardships she faces because she wants to be seen as such. Blanche uses her beauty to hide her true self and get what she wants. Blanche often begs for compliments asking 'How do I look' often receiving what she wants to hear.

Commentary:

This is a response which deals with the surface-level meanings of the text, and is often very narrative in approach, describing and paraphrasing the events of the play. The essay reads more as a character study of Blanche, rather than an exploration of how beauty is presented. For AO3 and 5, there was no context or alternative meanings/readings seen, hence a mark low in Level 1. For AO1 and 2, the use of references to the text pushes it just into Level 2.

Advice:

It is worth reminding students to make a plan and use it to collate their ideas about the text in relation to the question, rather than allowing the narrative of the plot to dictate the direction of their responses.

A contrasting example:

The importance of beauty & appearance is a key theme explored by Williams, & how modernising Americas perception of beauty changed from "poetry & music" to the importance of money symbolised by the recurring motif of "poker".

We see this ~~off~~ difference in ideals, a ~~battle between an Antebellum idealism & a more true realism~~ as so a battle between the antiquated idealism of the antebellum, & the raw realism of ~~the~~ modernity.

Williams sees the play as the "ravishing of the tender, the beautiful & the sensitive" by the "brutal modern forces". So in this light "women must be beautiful" definitely applies to Blanche if we look in a light of the innocent trying to protect themselves. Blanche definitely uses beauty as one of her layers of "magic" to protect her from her reality, & to gain "the kindness of strangers" she depends on ~~some~~ much. But Blanches beauty from the beginning is described as "delicate beauty which must avoid a strong light." This recurring motif of light around Blanches beauty "avoid strong light," "paper lantern"

all go towards this built up pressure to keep up appearances in a world where ~~women were treated as anything less~~ her South, & "White Columns" have no place & she is made "incongruous". Her genteel appearance is all that binds her to her idealised past, before she was equated with death & loss, & her physical beauty is begining to deteriorate by mirroring the loss of belle reeves. In this way Blanches beauty ~~could represent, as Williams sees her, as redness her~~ ~~the "defensive & sensitive & beautiful"~~ beauty mimics the crumbling of the south, this is especially seen in her costume the use of plastic theatre, Williams aims broad of expressionism, lending itself to the visualisation of Blanche & the souths defeat. ~~As~~ She is introduced in white, which through the play is a recurring symbol, even her name, as she professes "means white," showing this projection of herself as "clean" & pure, encapsulating the female ideals of the antebellum, mimicing the expectations of the Southern Belle. This could be seen as satirical, as Williams juxtaposes her "white" & "floral" anti's of innocents with her red robe, which shows the modern ideas of sensualized beauty, with the connotations of the red woman from the bible. Yet Williams could be seen as greatly sympathetic, which corresponds with his treatment of Blanche, & the juxtaposition of her starting in "white" & ending in "red" could be a lament for the South. Williams saw the antebellum as an age of beauty & education, so this feels a more likely

reason for his use of costume, demonstrating the conquering of the "butchish modern forces".

Beauty also comes greatly into the relationships of a streetcar named desire. We are presented with the Stanley & Stella relationship, which matches perfectly to a modern ideal, a "gentle" yet sensual "pretty" wife, with a "compactly built" man with "drive". The foil is presented in the development of the relationship with Blanche & Mitch. Mitch is presented as: "awkward", "shy", "self-conscious", all words that contradict the masculine ideals. This could be seen to doom their relationship from the start, for as McDonough says "Mitch fails to break through the sexual code policed by Stanley". Showing how Mitch's weakness cannot conquer in such a brutal society. As a homosexual man, Williams would have felt the pressure of masculinity, in a time of great homophobia, & this contradictory character of Mitch encapsulates the feeling in society that "men have to be strong to succeed". But you could also see it that Mitch's failure comes from "instead of presenting a positive alternative" Mitch ends up "imitating" Stanley, which is proposed by ~~and~~ This is seen when in scene 9 he tries to "formally embrace" her. This shows that maybe if he hadn't tried to follow societal expectation, he would have been able to succeed with Blanche, instead of taking on societal expectations & despairing to his & Blanche's

Commentary:

This is a discriminating response, making a range of effective arguments, beginning with and developing a conceptualised idea of beauty. The focus on beauty through the lens of modernity is an interesting perspective, handled well by the candidate, with mostly sophisticated expression and evaluations of the text. AO3 and 5 are particularly strong, with frequent interwoven references to context throughout the essay, and a critical use of critical perspectives. It is only some slight but noticeable weakness of expression and control for AO1 that stops this being full marks for both marking grids.

Advice:

Candidates should remember that they must consider the question, as well as the critical quotation. Conversely, a significant minority of students focussed solely on the presentation of Blanche's beauty, making this an essay about her, rather than one which explores both masculine and feminine presentation, as encouraged by the critical quotation.

Question 15**Question 16**

There were no responses to the questions set on Lynn Nottage's Sweat.

Question 17**Question 18**

There were no responses to the questions set on Waiting for Godot this year.

