



Examiners' Report **June 2022**

GCE English Literature 9ET0 03

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Introduction

After the enforced suspension of full-scale examinations since 2019, there was naturally some trepidation about the 2022 series. It is therefore gratifying to report that we have seen the full range of achievement this year, with a pleasing number of responses justifiably awarded full marks. Despite the disruptions of the last two years, most candidates appeared well-prepared. The quality of candidates' work was impressive and is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the candidates and their teachers. The vast majority of responses were clear and relevant and showed that candidates were engaging well with their chosen texts and the question set.

There were aspects that could be attributed to the impact of the pandemic and consequent lack of examination practise. A small number of candidates appear to have spent too long on Section A, resulting in Section B answers that were short or even in a few cases not attempted at all. Poor handwriting – again possibly through lack of practise in formal situations – occasioned more comment than usual, causing candidates (and their examiners) problems. We can only urge teachers, once again, to guide candidates for whom this is a potential problem to take appropriate remedial action.

Section A

The unseen poem, Jane Commane's *On the New Bypass*, proved accessible on some level to all candidates. The questions, involving comparing the unseen poem with a set poem, proved similar in difficulty to the previous series. Rather more candidates answered on Question 2, but there was no evidence of difference in challenge and excellent work was seen on both options. Comparison was well executed. Work on the poet's craft was however less successful overall than in previous years; this was also evident in Section B, where it sometimes received less attention than contextual information.

Candidates who achieved higher level marks were able to demonstrate aspects such as an understanding of what a bypass was and how this could symbolically link to the concept of people being 'bypassed' in modern society or how a modern life can leave people behind. Almost all candidates engaged with Commane's image of the girl in the tree, with responses ranging, at the lower levels, from seeing this as some sort of metaphor for the discontent felt by those in contemporary urban environments. More analytical answers linked this, for example, to the 'radio jingle' as a cacophonous symbol of futility.

Candidates who understood the nuanced ideas in the poems fared better than others. The poem by Julia Copus in Question 2 offered many opportunities for analysis but weaker candidates often missed the idea of the girl being reluctant to grow and finding solace or comfort at home. However, the poem did allow weaker candidates to access the question whilst providing depth for more able candidates.

A few guidelines for candidates based on the experience of this year's examiners:

- Be willing to embrace ambiguity and be tentative: this is likely to be particularly helpful for the unseen poem, as you will have already engaged several times with the anthology poem named in the question. Commane's poem offered the opportunity for multiple interpretations – show and explore these. Avoid being overly definite about what poems 'mean' – be aware of, and try to convey, nuance in your interpretation.
- Avoid analysing specific features of structure language, etc, in isolation. Don't leap straight into explaining how the writers had used these before outlining the premise of the poem, otherwise it's likely your comments will be vague, unconnected to the overall impact of the poem. Start with the premise of the poem or key imagery before explaining how the structural aspects develop, mirror or even subvert the ideas in the poem. Avoid what Professor Robert Eaglestone recently described as the 'incorrect version of how we interpret literary texts which encourages "feature spotting" and an overemphasis on mastering vocabulary'. This is not particularly useful in explaining how meaning is created within the poems. Instead relate writers' choices to the themes, messages or impacts of the poems.
- Focus your analysis of structure on specific examples – rather than making a general comment on, for example, enjambment across a poem. Careful analysis of poetic craft is a distinguishing feature of higher level answers but it needs to be specific and related to your exploration of the impact of each poem as a whole.
- A learned essay structure, which may be helpful at the beginning of your studies, can be limiting at A Level and stifle an engaged response. The categories will not all be equally useful or of merit for the texts and question in front of you. However....
- Time spent planning is rarely wasted. A clear introduction which indicates a sense of direction for your response and a sense of overview of the poems will help your reader (in this case the examiner) understand where you are taking them. An essay structured in cohesive paragraphs will demonstrate what Level 4 of the marking grid describes as 'a controlled argument' – support this with ongoing close analysis and you should be making 'a critical evaluative argument', which is Level 5.
- Finally, do pay close attention to the wording of the question; this year again a few candidates were handicapped by avoidable errors (in both sections) about the poems or topics set.

Section B

Questions followed the pattern set in previous years, presenting candidates with a similar level of challenge. All questions appeared accessible, allowing candidates of all abilities to respond and strong responses were seen on all texts. A few candidates, perhaps not making a full transition from Section A, unnecessarily expended effort on comparing their two poems, an aspect not required here. Context is the third strand here and needs to be woven into the response in an integrated manner. Rather than presenting generalised statements about the social, historical or personal background, the best answers used the poems themselves as a way into the most *relevant* aspects. What is the significance, for example, of Blake's reference to the 'charter'd street' and 'charter'd Thames'?

Chaucer, the Romantic poets, Keats and Rossetti were again the most popular choices, with Donne trailing behind. There was a handful of entries on Medieval poetic drama; pleasingly, this year, among some modest answers on this text there was also a Level 5 mark script. Twentieth Century poetry was again a minority option. There were only a few entries on The Movement anthology; here, and for Larkin, candidates often struggled to move much beyond general comment and biographical links for AO3.

Where candidates took a chronological approach to poems and worked through them in this way, rather than planning a thematic approach in response to the topic which allowed for greater and more judicious selection of relevant material, they seldom moved beyond Level 3. More technical questions (the use of the sonnet by Keats, for example) demonstrated the need for candidates who tackle them to have a more developed understanding of poetic craft to fully develop their response.

Question 1

The pairing of Commane's poem with the Turnbull opened up all kinds of interesting potential avenues for discussion. Many candidates engaged effectively with the idea of urban environments and the different ways in which the poems handle this idea. Interesting connections emerged in relation to the bleaker vision of Commane's poem with its sense of circularity and being trapped as compared to the more vibrant and energetic representation of the Turnbull. Other excellent connections were developed around ideas to the poets' use of cars, music, sound, colour and buildings.

Most candidates made productive comments on the unseen, principally through considering the brief depictions of disparate characters; the girl in the tree and her symbolic significance – and how uncaring it is that nobody questions why she is crying; and the six tercet structure and how it might relate to the fragmentary quality of modern urban existence. Many responses picked up on the reference to the arts through, painting, photography, music and architecture and used these as a point of connection to Turnbull's 'Ode'. The bisecting vanishing point was often a source of confusion, but the ambiguity of whether 'we travel towards light or away from it' was seen more confidently as a comment on urban life being a good or bad thing. The 'girl in the tree ... crying' generally confirming that it probably is rather dystopian – some saw her as clinging to the last remnant of the natural world that had been covered in concrete.

Having 'girls' in each poem assisted the weaker candidates to make connections. Few candidates, however, addressed the pace and vitality of Turnbull's poem. Where candidates were less successful, it tended to be where they had followed the poem line by line and were confused by the tone shift at the end. Some were unable to appreciate the issues around the narrator's interrogation of the vase, its presented scene as a piece of art, and how these factors might affect the narrator's voice, allowing for irony and critical distance, such as the irony of the 'Daily Express view'. More sophisticated responses (with a scattering of 'ekphrastic') considered the idea of Keats' response to a scene frozen in time from the distant past and how that compared to representations of the present by both poets.

Both Turnbull and Commane explore contemporary urban life in their poems Ode on a Grayson Perry Urn and On the New Bypass. Whilst Commane comments bleakly on a modern world where people seem desensitised, self-interested and unhappy, Turnbull in his ekphrastic poem seems to conclude there is a beauty in the modern world that should be ~~admired~~ admired.



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Examiner Comments

This introduction sets out clearly the direction of travel, addressing the question and indicating briefly how each poem approaches the topic, ending with a note of comparison that will be sustained throughout the response. A second extract will show how that was sustained later in the answer.



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Examiner Tip

The value of a well-planned essay is demonstrated here: this went on to score full marks.

However, as Turnbull suggests the vase "conjures) the scene without inducing fright," his poem too presents ~~a~~ ^{the} joy and energy of this chaotic image. ~~This language~~ language. The speaker's language merges with the vernacular with "buff" "geezers" "thong," seeming out of place in an ode. The pun, "ecstasy," being the pinnacle of the two diction merging, with its duality in being 'extreme joy' in a poetic sense and a drug in the vernacular. ~~The merging of these~~ The unashamed use of the colloquial gives a sense of celebration in its purity, something common refrains from doing.

Both authors also use the structure of their poems to comment on modern life. Turnbull's frequent use of enjambement creates a pace to the exciting image he describes, for example "the nervous squeals / of girls too young to quite appreciate / the peril they are in," as girls in cars are raced round in cars. The overall structure of the poem returns back to the concept of the vase being art, wondering whether "future poets" may see how "Nappy ~~those creators~~ were those creators men." Despite

calling it "kitschy vase" at the beginning and "gorish crown" by the end, Turnball seems to have concluded that this urban, contemporary, working class ~~et~~ crowd ~~are also~~ make good art. Commone ^{uses} ~~using~~ her structure to diametrically oppose this view. Enjambement is used, for example, "sturred video/on low bandwidth" to create a sense of ~~pause~~ a sluggish world, full of "traffic." ~~Also~~ Her cyclical structure, ending on the "gift in the tree", does not allow a conclusion to be drawn like it is in Turnball's poem - instead the ~~poet ends~~ speaker is "not sure." There appears to be lots to unpack in the fragmented modern world.

Overall both Turnball and Commone appear to be viewing the same modern world - of traffic, teens, and business. However, where Commone's world seems to be at a dull standstill, fragmented and bleak, Turnball's depiction of a pulsing modernity conveys a positivity ~~about~~ ~~and ex~~ excitement, and beauty about contemporary urban life.



This second extract from the same top Level 5 response shows the candidate pulling the argument together with close reference to the poems. Comparison of tone in each poem are made succinctly and effectively, showing a sensitive awareness of the shifts in Turnbull in particular. The comparisons are sustained to the final paragraph with evaluations of the different ways the poems conclude.



Don't be afraid to be tentative: this answer uses the terms 'there appears to be' and 'seems'.

In addition to this, in Commone's poem, contemporary urban life is also presented as uncertain and doubtful. This can be inferred from the poet's use of a semantic field of uncertainty: "wondering", "seen", "I'm not sure", "if". The use of this semantic field clearly expresses the doubt ~~of~~ ^{and} uncertainty felt by the contemporary society. Moreover, in the last stanza, Commone uses repetition to further express this doubt and uncertainty: "I'm not sure if we travel towards light or away from it, or if the girl in the tree will stop crying, if she'll ever come down". The use of the repetition of "if" demonstrates the ^{speaker's} ~~speaker's~~ uncertainty. Moreover, the long sentence used here conveys the multiple possibilities that life has to offer and the speaker, like the rest of society, is unsure what will be the outcome. On the contrary, in 'Ode on a Grasshopper



This extract shows a candidate who is picking up the tone of Commane's poem portraying urban life as 'uncertain and doubtful', illustrating this in some detail. However, despite mentioning this 'semantic field', the response fails to move beyond pointing out the language used to develop an analysis of the effect this has. As a result, this remains in Level 3, close to but not over the border into 'discriminating'.



Higher level answers move beyond describing to demonstrate understanding through analysis of the poet's craft.

Question 2

The pairing of the Commane poem with Julia Copus' *An Easy Passage* allowed for interesting and varied approaches to the idea of change. Many candidates engaged effectively with the poets' exploration of liminal spaces as reflective of the experiences and processes of change, and were often interested to explore connections surrounding the move from youth to adulthood. Better candidates were able to observe the distinction between Commane's more 'unchanging' poem with its many images of stasis and Copus' emphasis on the inevitability of change.

Popular points of comparison between these two poems included the similarity of perspectives with observers watching the scenes unfold. A number framed their response around an argument regarding types of change, with *An Easy Passage* being about a personal change but relevant to women widely and *On the New Bypass* having a wider focus on a changing society. Better answers commented on the connection between the 'drab factory' in the Copus poem and the 'evil eye' of the architect in *On the New Bypass* thus showing disapproval of modern cityscapes and what they may symbolise about the 'adult world'. Some chose to connect this with the crying girl being stuck conversely in a 'tree' – representing nature.

There were many examples at Level 3 or above and most candidates were able to respond to the poems beyond the narrative level. One problem was a narrow interpretation of the theme of change, relating it only to growing up. The better responses also included reference to changes in the environment. Familiarity with crafting techniques showed some limitation, the most common weakness was spotting enjambment and end-stopping without explaining their effects.

Secondly, ~~both poets portray~~ ~~change~~
both poets differ on the extent of the
change. In 'An Easy Passage' the
change is personal between the woman and
the young girl, whereas in 'On the New
Bypass' the change is impersonal and
societal. Interestingly, Commane uses the
semantic field of technology to
describe the change, describing it as a
'skinned video ~~with~~ on low bandwidth'

arguably implying that the technological era has ~~very~~ ~~too~~ corrupted our society. This is displayed in stanza 2, with the 'mother/daughter pairing' who are brought into existence through 'a fashion - shoot'. The implication that the only way they can bond and be recognised is through ~~being on~~ a vain fashion shoot on the bypass. This very unnatural image is juxtaposed with the idea that they have 'fallen' into existence and that ~~the~~ photos 'photographs' are the only way they are recognised or valued in society.

In comparison, the inter-personal change in 'An Easy Passage' is ~~shown~~ devoted through ~~lopus~~ using over thirty lines to describe the girl and a mere five to describe the ~~too~~ secretary.

So Even structurally the poem suggests the worth of the woman versus the child. The secretary's ~~in~~ ambitions are an 'evening class' or a 'trip of a lifetime' versus the girl whose only ambition is to get into the house without falling onto the 'asphalt'. Moreover the notion



Here, the candidate is engaging with the imagery in the poems, particularly the way the Commane describes an apparent social disconnect with terms like 'slurred video', and compares this to the contrast between the girl in *An Easy Passage* and the 'flush-faced secretary' across the street. This demonstrates a level of discrimination that could have been taken further. As it is, this is a secure Level 4 response.



Discussion of details such as imagery should be part of an exploration of the effect of the poem as a whole.

It is perhaps the case that, in both poems, the speakers' seeming reluctance to accept change is derived from the ambivalence of their narration toward the new reality which they portray, as both poets show apparent hostility, or, at the least, distaste for the changed world into which their characters enter. In "An Easy Passage", Julia Copus frequently contrasts the blissful innocence of the girls' childhood with the dark and dreary nature of adulthood, thereby creating an aversion to the change despite its necessity. Most indicative of this is the consistent light and dark imagery utilized to contrast the girls' anger with their destination - for example, the "bleak gravel" is given life and light by its colorful description while the "shiny, hob-gnawed, elimination lever" for which the girl on the porch reaches is distinctly grey.

and indeed the relation between the "blood gravel" from which the girl has ascended ~~and~~ and the dullness of womanhood is emphasised by the fact that the feminine ending is omitted from the "blood" adjective such that it is detached from the womanhood to which the girl climbs. Furthermore, the girls are said to be "lit, as if from within, their hair and the gold strand earrings in the first one's ears" forming a marked structural juxtaposition with the dreary "long, grey eye of the street" and the "drab electroplating dulcifying over the road", light and dark contrasted to highlight the ~~existing~~ existing nobility and innocence of girlhood and its distance from the corrupted, bland womanhood into which the girls change, a contrast made all the more pointed by the sudden hypotaxis of the speaker as the punctuation begins to fragment the narrative more at this point of the poem. This notion is consummated by the introduction of a third figure, the "flash-faced secretary" who sits in a room across the road and observes the "five neat shimmering-oyster-painted benches" ~~at~~ [...] catch the sunlight" before being consumed by "the shade of the house" - another boundary is created whereby the secretary, who has already made this transition, observes ~~the~~ and notes the light and dark contrast as the girl enters the house and, symbolically, womanhood and puberty, the final introduction of the sunlight fragmented then by the deep, enjambled once more, into the house, and hence Copus consummates her ambivalence toward puberty and the change it denotes. Commune in "On the New Bypass" is similarly detached from the new world she describes in the poem, initiating her decision of the ~~the~~ change precipitated by the bypass by diminishing the girl's "weeping" into "a persistent ravelled jingle above the traffic", an something of an antithesis in that weeping, quite obviously, indicates despair, while a "jingle" is perhaps more readily associated as a means of happiness and optimism, and hence Commune figuratively suggests the blindness of the new bypass to the despair it has caused in its monumental change, as well as



This is an extract from a strong Level 5 response, showing how description of language and structure develops into discriminating evaluation of the varieties of effect created by the two poets. Line breaks, for example, are discussed for the ways they suggest a moment of transition. The candidate uses phrases like 'seeming reluctance' to suggest how the poets' words suggest and imply rather than simply asserting a view.



The best work in Section A closely integrates comparison (AO4) within the discussion of the poets' craft.

Question 3

There were again only a few responses on these Medieval plays, with most on Question 4.

Pageant plays aimed to make Biblical stories and teaching more accessible to common medieval people, with a large proportion of the lower classes being unable to read Latin (the language the Bible was transcribed in, and only taught to a higher class). The Bible was made ~~unreadable~~ inaccessible to them. Therefore they could only learn what religious leaders decided to teach them. Pageant plays were a visual performance of Biblical events that allowed everyone to learn. A way in which these stories were made more engaging was by including comedy, or altering the events. This is done in 'The Second Shepherd's Pageant' by creating characters for the existing



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Examiner Comments

This extract from the first page of the answer shows the candidate making an accurate but general point about the purpose and performing context of the poetic dramas. It is however much longer than necessary and not tied to any specific point in the extracts chosen. The response overall was awarded a mark just over the border into Level 3.



Anchor any contextual reference to a section of the text, if possible, by linking it to a direct quotation.

Question 4

Candidates responded well to the invitation to discuss characterisation, in both Noah's Wife and the (mostly unseen) wives of the shepherds. Candidates were able to demonstrate comedic effects and able to make links to aspects of carnival to support their discussions with comments on aspects such as the 'subtle interaction between the actors and the crowd'.

However, this provided actors with the opportunity to ~~provide~~ create depth within their characters, as ~~actors~~ the actor of the wife could, cry, shout, or flail their arms to ~~pre~~ emphasise her stubborn or troublesome nature. ~~This image is~~ ~~This image~~ when forced into the ark, she "boxes (Noah) on the ear", and ~~he re~~ his is dialogue follows with "Aha! Marry, this is not!" Once more, this violent ~~yet~~ comedic interaction is used to ~~spark~~ introduce a comedic element into the play, as we can infer each character's persona through their interactions. Noah is presented to be calmer and less serious, whilst his wife's character represents the overbearing, disobedient Medieval woman.

Lastly, whilst 'Noah's Flood' heavily emphasises the presentation and characterisation of Medieval women, the Wakefield ~~Master~~ explores societal challenges through the first shepherd, Coll.

Coll complains of his difficult work life, as he explains "Thus ~~we~~ live we in pain, anger and woe", as the triplet emphasises the sufferings of a ~~mid~~ lower class worker. The playwright



This extract shows a candidate taking the opportunity to link characterisation to the pageant setting of the plays and to contemporary attitudes to women. Later, attention turns to the language used to describe 'the lower class worker', where 'the triplet emphasises the suffering'. This was a Level 4 answer.



There are many ways a writer can create an impact, from physical action (seen here in stage directions) to word and phrase patterns: pick out whatever is suitable.

Question 5

Chaucer is a popular choice and many candidates scored well. Some responses, however, identified an second extract but then failed to use it in the response and others either identified an extract or even failed to specify a passage but then used other parts of the Prologue or Tale to illustrate their points. Although some reference to the whole text is inevitable, the requirement is to use 'one other extract of similar length', not to range across the whole work.

The concept of satire proved to be a challenging one. However, candidates were able to make a strong argument to show the contextual constraints within which Chaucer produced the work. Although there were some less well developed arguments, most looked at the idea that Chaucer's representation of the Wife is ambiguous, given the parallel between her (mis)use of exegesis and the corruption in the Medieval church. One particularly successful response referred to the 'carnavalesque post-Black Death zeitgeist' of the work. Seeing the Wife as an 'anti-feminist' object of satire was balanced by her ability to outwit her old husbands.

Close consideration of technique was often patchy. Contextual references were generally secure, but rather general, in considering Medieval patriarchal norms, but there were some more specific references (e.g. to Galen's idea of the woman's body being cold and moist) that were used productively. A number of responses focused on anti-feminist/feminist concepts which while not necessarily detrimental, in some cases concentrated too much on a modern view.

Chaucer further explores the satirical representation of the Wife by subverting the conventions of this type of literature and showing the Wife to promote and even celebrate these negative qualities in women. The wife glosses a proverb - "Whoso the first to mille cometh, first gyt;" and uses this to explain her actions - "I playned first, so was oure wote ystent. / They were ful glade to excuse hem blis / of thing of which they rewe agitte his line." The ~~man~~ Wife explains that as she could foresee her husband's complaints, she complained first and therefore ended argument arguments as her husbands were happy to be forgiven of things they were not even guilty of, the Wife's didactic tone and use of an end-stop line here highlight she is accused of her actions and concludes this part of her 'sermon'.

In the mid-thirteenth Century in the 'Laws and Customs of England' it is written that "Man differ from women in many respects for their position is ~~that~~ inferior to that of men". The Wife is aware of this view and highlights "For al swich wit is gyven us in oure birthe; / Decrete, weping, spyring God hath yive / To women kindly, whil that



This passage from a good Level 5 response looks at how the Wife both satirises and fulfils the stereotypes of women at the time. The comments on her 'didactic tone' and the 'end-stopped line' show an acute awareness of Chaucer's craft.



Spend time on analysis of the writer's craft, not only in regards to language choices but also to structure and poetic features. This will help candidates develop more discriminating responses.

3rd shocking for the time. Indeed, the friars
"serchen every lond and every stream, / As
thikke as motes in the sonne-beam", ironically
implying that whilst they may be ^{superficially} spreading
religion, like a coating of dust, they are
in fact visiting for money and non-holy
purposes; the humorous image of friars
"blessinge halles, chambres, kitchenes, bowres,"
~~etc~~ and various other places and the
listing highlighting their overzealous application
to their job (of collecting money) 13

perhaps used by Chaucer to satirically
question the motives of friars, using the
layered voice of the wife to more radical
means. As Chaucer was part of the king's



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Examiner Comments

This analysis of the way Chaucer uses 'the layered voice of the Wife' for satirical purposes comes from a secure level 4 response.



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Examiner Tip

Careful selection of extracts enable the demonstration of the ways poets convey effects such as satire.

Question 6

Choice of the second passage was key in achieving a range of examples when answering Question 6 on morality. Many took the extract of the Wife's fight and reconciliation with Jankyn to compare with the morality of the conclusion of the Knight's marriage to the loathly lady. The most popular line of argument was that the Knight got away with his crime and his victim was silenced, reflecting attitudes to gender and status in the Fourteenth Century. More developed responses considered the concept of 'gentillesse' and how Chaucer's audience might have regarded the social hierarchy as a factor in the Queen's judgement and the 'happy ending' of the *Tale*. Again, detailed considerations of language were rather thin. Contextual referencing sometimes mentioned Chaucer's own history in relation to the Knight's crime; Theophrastus and St Jerome were often cited as key authorities for patriarchal society.

Comments on morality sometimes considered Chaucer's feminism, proto-feminism – or lack of feminism. Teachers might want to consider critical ways of looking at texts from another time because some of these arguments about what the extracts said about Chaucer weren't convincing.

Chaucer sees the wife's moral character as a stereotypical 'shrew', removing any notion of protofeminism. However, his portrayal of the wife's morality is not simply black and white - making his work a 'product of its time'. Instead, I believe Chaucer uses the negative, seemingly satirical presentation of the 'morally inept' wife as a way to disguise and hide his own views through to his audience, hidden amongst the wife's outrageous opinions. His ^{the wife's} distaste 'ballad-esque' distaste for corruption in the contextual church almost certainly is a result of Chaucer's own views of the church, shown by his numerous disagreements with it. I believe the wife is simply a vehicle to direct uproar from himself, shielding his views through multiple layers of narration and subsequently, interpretation. So while I disagree that Chaucer was 'protofeminist' in his depiction of the Wife's morality, I do believe he puts forward his own qualms with society through her character.



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Examiner Comments

This conclusion to a Level 5 answer shows a sophisticated response to Chaucer's presentation of morality in the text. Phrases such as 'Whilst I disagree that Chaucer was protofeminist'... show that a critical and evaluative approach to this aspect can be rewarding.



This level of conceptual analysis can only succeed if it has been preceded by close reading of the text.

Question 7

This question on the use of contrasts produced some very good responses exploring the literary and intellectual context. Many candidates showed an excellent understanding of the nuances of Metaphysical poetry – the broad nature of this group of poems, the broad definition of Metaphysical poetry as a genre, the contradictions which are typical of these poems and so on. Candidates overwhelmingly produced controlled and discriminating responses, exploring how language and structure worked almost symbiotically to create specific effects.

Andrew Marvell's ~~love poem~~ ~~poem~~ for metaphysical
poem, 'The Definition of Love' ~~is~~ is
full of contrasts between the perfect and
the imperfect. The mortal ~~views~~ speaker
views his love as perfect, 'My love is
of a birth as rare', ~~with~~ the metaphor of
'birth' describing its ^{overwhelming} power and is synonymous
with life giving. ~~and~~ The ~~poem~~ describes it
as 'divine' giving it a transcendental
status in the poem. By the description
of the mortal speaker we assume, on
the basis of neoplatonism that his 'love'
is like a 'form' and a 'divine template'.
However, this is paradoxical as such
is not possible in the mortal world
and thereby we have our first paradox.
Instead it seems the speaker is
using the concept of love as a form
to make it more transcendental and
metaphysical to him. This is in essence,
conceited, and perhaps is why these



This extract, using 'sophisticated structure and expression', is a close reading of Marvell's poem, confidently using details from the text to address the topic of contrasts. Use of terms such as 'neoplatonism' indicate a secure grasp of relevant context. The essay went on to gain a high Level 5 mark.



An understanding of terms such as 'conceit' gives candidates access to the ways these poets view and present their world.

Question 8

Work on the portrayal of guilt was, as in Question 7, generally of a good standard. Poems chosen to compare with *A Hymn to God the Father* included *The Flea*, *Batter My Heart*, Herbert's *The Collar* and Vaughan's *Unprofitableness*. Guilt was generally linked to either or both of Donne's libertine lifestyle and his apostasy in deserting Catholicism for the English Reformed Church. Where the second poem used was also by Donne, these tended to supply the substance of contextual references, although stronger answers discussed the nature of Metaphysical conceits and the use of mathematical and scientific conceits from the Age of Reason and the Renaissance. Biographical references to other poets were less detailed.

Most responses saw the confessional nature of *A Hymn to God the Father* as reflective of Donne's feelings about his own, lifelong, sense of guilt that nonetheless did not stop him straying; there were a couple that considered Catholic and Protestant attitudes to confession. The puns on Son/sun and done/Donne in the final stanza were picked up on by most, a couple seeing the latter of these as a sign of Donne's egocentricity.

Question 9

Redemption was a concept that some candidates engaged with very effectively, placing the poetry within an array of interesting religious and biographical contexts. There were productive discussions on Donne's portrayal of himself as a conscious sinner who nonetheless believes that he can be redeemed, this being reflected in the East/West opposition and the idea of penance through physical punishment that links to the violent language in *Batter My Heart*. Others used *A Hymn to God the Father*, when the task became similar to Question 8.

Candidates sometimes discussed the scientific context of astronomy and the difference between the geocentric model of the 'spheres' that Donne adopts and the heliocentric model that was widely recognised by the end of the Sixteenth Century, possibly being analogous to Donne's move from Catholicism to Protestantism.

dichotomy between East and West allows Donne to aptly depict the struggle between a life of sin (embodied by the West which is associated with the setting sun, and by extension darkness), and a life of repentance - captured by the East, the direction of Jerusalem and Christ's crucifixion. This elaborate conceit portrays the difficulty of redemption when one is 'Subject to foreign motions' such as sin. Perhaps Donne could even be alluding to his own apostasy from Catholicism - some critics believe he sacrificed his faith to progress politically in a Protestant society. The confession that 'my soul's form bends towards the East' could therefore be interpreted as a confession of Donne's true loyalty to his Catholic upbringing, and his search for redemption.



This extract from near the beginning of a high level response shows the candidate dealing deftly with the details of the text ('the dichotomy between East and West') and the topic of the question ('the difficulty of redemption when one is "subject to foreign motions"). The relevance of Donne's own doctrinal struggles is touched on lightly as further illumination of the text.



Always keep the question in mind, and refer to key words throughout to keep the essay on task.

God'. The phrase beginning combined with the direct address of God aligns with the tradition of Metaphysical poetry to have an arresting opening. Donne depicts the transformative effect of redemption through the cumulative list of powerful verbs, 'break, blow, burn, and make ~~to~~ me new.' The repetition of phrases in the semantic field of violence seems to portray redemption as a painful but rewarding process, with the promise of being made 'new'. This line echoes the speaker's plea in 'Goodfriday' to 'Burn off my rusts and my deformity'. The imagery of fire and burning further encourages the interpretation that ~~the~~ redemption would be a painful process. In the religious



This second extract from the same essay deals with Donne's *Holy Sonnet XIV*. Here again short, well-chosen extracts are woven into the argument. The rhetorical aspect to Metaphysical poetry is referenced along with other features of Donne's craft. The shift to the other poem is neatly made; comparison is not required but in the hands of a confident writer can help draw the discussion together especially when poems by the same author are concerned. This response was awarded a high Level 5 mark.



A 'critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped' requires close attention to a number of relevant poetic features of the texts.

Question 10

Popular choices of poem to accompany *Twickenham Garden* included *Holy Sonnet X* ('Death Be Not Proud') and *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*.

Less astute candidates tended to see this question as similar to Question 7 and dealt with contrasts without engaging with the all-important idea of resolution. Some less confident answers did not really convince that they had grasped what the contradictions were. Higher achieving responses explored the sophisticated ways in which contradictory conceits are resolved as a characteristic of Metaphysical poetry. Some discussed Donne's relationship with Lucy Russell as patron as a key to a successful consideration of contradiction in *Twickenham Garden*. Donne's presentation of himself as a lover who poisons or corrupts and the religious allusions relating to transubstantiation and the Book of Genesis were generally well-understood; the closing conceit of 'her truth kills me' tended to be ignored.

'Twickenham garden' is a poem that references the garden of Eden and Donne believes that he has no chance of reaching heaven. Catholics believe that the afterlife

consists of purgatory - a place where someone will stay and suffer the punishment of their sins until they reach heaven. Everyone's final destination will be heaven regardless of their life on earth. John Donne was a strong catholic who later became one of the most admired protestant preachers of his time. Therefore it is clear to understand that he had concerns for life after death and he was aware that his sins would stop him from reaching heaven: "the paradise, I have the serpent brought." The serpent is an effective metaphor to describe the evil and darkness of sins that would contaminate the 'true paradise'. This juxtaposition is effective to represent the extent of purity within heaven and how Donne's sins he has "brought in" doesn't belong there.

In 'A Hymn to ^{God} the Father', Donne uses anaphora by beginning each stanza with the phrase "will thou forgive that sin" ~~which is repeated~~. This repeated phrase shows John Donne's doubt in god, because he is questioning whether his sins will be forgiven. In the first stanza he goes on to say "For I have more" which ~~keeps~~ shows he has ~~an~~ awareness that he has committed more sins. This is contradicting because it seems bizarre to be repenting whilst still committing other sins. He resolves this contradiction in the last



This extract is a useful comparison to the extracts cited for Question 9. The candidate's references of Purgatory, the serpent, Catholic and Protestant, are all relevant but only generally linked to the text. Anaphora is noticed though the full effect needed exploring. At the end of the extract the candidate writes that it is contradictory and 'bizarre' to be 'repenting whilst still committing other sins'. This identifies a potentially fruitful line of enquiry and shows some understanding of the agonising tensions Donne describes, though the analysis is not developed in further detail. This is taken from a mid-Level 3 answer.



Rather than general descriptions of contextual aspects, make the references directly arise from, and illuminate, the text.

Question 11

Question 11 was the most popular choice on the paper. Candidates seemed to find the theme of suffering gave them scope for exploring *Songs of Experience: London* with a range of second poems. There was a considerable knowledge of the historical context as well as a comprehensive awareness of at least some features of Romanticism. In some cases, it was clear that candidates would have benefited from a broader understanding of the Romantic movement, including its political, artistic, social interests as well as the movement's association with the elevation of the natural world.

Much was made – not altogether convincingly – of *London* being a poem about collective suffering in contrast to second poems that deal with suffering on a more individual level. Better responses engaged with the four key 'individuals' in the Blake and the relationship to the poem's treatment of the broader and more universal suffering of humanity with which Blake deals.

Many used *Holy Thursday* from *Songs of Experience* as the second poem, but then struggled to get to grips with the presentation of suffering with specific detail. A few used *The Sick Rose* but failed to develop much detail from this short poem. Byron's *On this Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year* was popular, giving candidates the opportunity to pick out references to individual suffering in contrast to the widespread suffering depicted through representative figures in *London*. There was, however, a sense with some of these that the second poem was chosen as a means of giving contextual information related to Byron.

What often turned out to be among the most sophisticated responses employed Keats – either *Ode to a Nightingale* or *Ode on Melancholy* – again contrasting personal to societal suffering, but often with a firmer grasp on context, particularly Romanticism as an evolving genre. Weaker responses sometimes discussed Blake as if he were consciously part of the Romantic movement; while there were some impressively well-informed responses about Keats, a few were clumsy in discussing his relationship with his contemporaries.

The vast majority of responses were clear and relevant with a large number demonstrating a discriminating and controlled understanding and style of writing. Once again, the distinguishing factors were often a sustained focus on the question (not meandering off into pre-prepared material on the poems – very common for *London*) as well as how far candidates used detailed analysis of writer's craft to develop their response and justify their line of argument.

There was occasional confusion between the *Songs of Innocence: Holy Thursday* and *Songs of Experience: Holy Thursday*. More seriously, a few candidates used the wrong poem, writing not on *Songs of Experience: London* but on another of Blake's poems (usually *Holy Thursday*). Since the poem's full title was clearly given in the question, it is hard to see why this should be the case.

One way in which Blake presents suffering ~~from~~ in his poems of Songs of Experience: London and Songs of Innocence: Holy Thursday is through the portrayal of how ~~the people in~~ society ~~is~~ is ^{disrupted} ^{there}, and ~~there~~ no freedom to strive for a better life. This is shown through the fact that the Thames is 'chartered' in London, which chiefly suggests the idea that the river, which traditionally represents freedom, has been confined and corrupted to be used as a means to help urban society. This emphasises the idea of the extent of the results of industrialisation, as something as free and beautiful as the river has been industrialised by humans. However, the adjective 'chartered' could also ~~convey the idea that~~ arguably convey the idea that the river has been mapped, thus showing how ~~the~~ nature is being confined and restricted. Romantic poets held the belief that nature benefited and helped humans, and therefore by confining it, humans are ~~in~~ confining their happiness. Furthermore, the idea



This is an extract from a clear response which sustains a purposeful focus on the question throughout and has a clear and logical structure. There is constructive engagement with the effects created by Blake's use of imagery (later the candidate discusses the symbolism of the beadles in *Songs of Innocence: Holy Thursday*, for example), but there is a lack of engagement with a wider range of poetic features such as structure, meter and rhyme. The exploration of context lacks the detail and specificity to move the response further than the middle of Level 3.

This extract conveys some understanding of the significance of Blake's use of 'charter'd' but this is more descriptive than analytical – for example, the repetition of the word is not noted. The attempt to link this to Romantic ideas about nature feels strained.



Distinguish between relevant description of context and poetic features and analysis of the significance of these in the impact of the poems.

power. Blake postulates that human suffering is mainly applied to those of lower social and economical status in 'London' where where the individuals' 'weakness' can be used against them. The speaker observes the appalling ^{realities} of which 'Infant's cry of fear' can be heard - but also the 'mind-forg'd manacles'. Here the use of metaphor, metaphorical use of the word 'manacles' creates a vivid image of oppression and imprisonment of the people of London. It is used to exemplify the tragedy of the labour and poverty that fills the 'Charter'd street[s]'. Here the reader can acknowledge the intensity of the suffering as the psychological chaining of peoples' minds' exists even in the openness of the 'streets' of London. Here, London itself is the prison, as the freedom of the 'chimney-sweeper's' is out of sight. The idea of confinement and restriction is presented through the use of highly structured tercets, in which takes on a very rigid usual aesthetic. Blake signifies through this that, escape from the torment and suffering that comes with poverty is non-negotiable. Instead, the suffering 'Infant', 'Man' and



This extract from a Level 4 response explores, in a more analytical way, Blake's portrayal of 'the psychological chaining of people's minds'. This is effectively linked to the 'rigid visual aesthetic' of the 'highly structured tercets', showing clear understanding of Blake's craft here.



Rather than labouring the commentary on one feature, aim to range across the text, analysing a number of related features in order to increase the impact of the response.

Question 12

Candidates who chose this question were mostly confident about the concept of 'vision' in relation to the Romantic tradition, though some struggled to clarify how they interpreted the keyword in the question. It was particularly important in this task that candidates took time to set out what they believe the poets' visions in the poems to be before exploring how such visions are pursued and represented.

Seen as a form of Greek art. Furthermore, Shelley uses an apostrophe form which directly speaks to the "West Wind". This allows the reader to get a better understanding of Shelley's vision as when the poem is read out loud, the readers also sound like they are praising and glorifying the "West Wind". Shelley's intention when doing this may have been to spread his atheistic values and ideas and allowing readers to consider other forms of powerful forces such as nature. This links to the idea of Pantheism where individuals put their belief in the manifestation of the universe. This suggests that Shelley may have considered Spinoza's version of the sublime or the belief in nature can reflect the interconnectedness of things. For example, the way the "West Wind" can connect "leaves", "ghosts" and "winter" together all through one force.



Having referred to the influence of 'Hellenism', this candidate develops the contextual and literary link by exploring Shelley's use of an apostrophe to the West Wind to give the reader 'a better understanding of Shelley's vision'. The mention of the poet's atheism goes beyond a simple biographical fact as it allows 'readers to consider other powerful forms such as nature'. This leads on to mention of 'Spinoza's version of the sublime'. The second poem, Wordsworth's *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* was well-chosen to enable further exploration of the topic. These 'sophisticated links between texts and contexts' show a candidate working at a conceptual level which was rewarded by a Level 5 mark.



A question of this kind, about a key feature of Romantic poetry – how poets saw themselves and their role – requires careful reflection on the ways the context, knowledge of poets' ideas, etc, can be integrated into a study of the poems chosen.

Question 13

The brevity of *'O Solitude! If I must with thee dwell'* allowed candidates to make really close readings of the poem. Many linked this to *'Bright Star! would I were steadfast as though art'* or *'When I have fears that I may cease to be'* and even *Ode to a Nightingale*, making for some very rich and engaging responses to Keats' poetry. There was plenty of opportunity for close-reading and appreciation of language. Context was generally focused on biography which worked when used to develop the candidates' response.

Effective answers identified and pursued the potentials of solitude and the ways in which this relates to broader concerns of Romanticism. A few responses seemed to try to work the question to a theme they would have preferred, such as death or Nature: this was inevitably less successful than answering the question set with relevant analysis.

Throughout, 'O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell', the theme of solitude is essential to the sonnet. The capitalisation of "Solitude" in the opening line personifies ~~the~~ solitude, giving emphasis to the emotion by portraying it to an entity. Keats uses the modal verb "must" within the opening line to ~~emphasise~~ portray how if he must be lonely, he would prefer it to be amongst nature, with its "newly slopes" and the "river's crystal swell". ~~This~~ This preferment of nature ~~is~~ links to the Romantic ideal of nature over urbanisation, which is further emphasised by the sensory imagery that is characteristic of Keats' poetry as he aims to immerse the reader in nature through the senses, ^{the importance of which's} as shown in ~~his~~ a 1817 letter where he states 'O for a life of sensations!' Referring to the river's 'crystal swell' gives connotations of value to the nature that surrounds the speaker, highlighting the



This section shows the candidate exploring the named poem in careful detail, marrying close reading to appropriate contextual factors such as 'the Romantic idea of Nature' and an extract from one of Keats' letters on 'a life of sensations'. This level of discriminating analysis was sustained throughout, resulting in a good Level 4 mark.



This is a further demonstration of the value of making contextual links alongside the discussion of the poetry.

of 'so live ever - or else swoon to death'
evokes feelings of romance from 'swooning'
and he desires death in the end. Resembling
eternality and solitude he finds rhyms
couplet 'breath' and 'death' connects life
and death, he doesn't want to be eternal
and he reasons for this is he doesn't want
to live in solitude. This is contextually relevant
to Keats' letter to Fanny Brawne in which
he describes his desire to live one day with
her as a butterfly rather than to live a life
alone. This idea is a key Romantic concept
shown by Thomas Chatterton that to live is
to be young, heed and to live in sensations.
It embodied the Romantic motto of living
bright, and fast.



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This candidate has chosen 'Bright Star! would I were steadfast as though art' as a second poem and here explores the ways Keats writes about the prospect of eternity alone by reference to 'the rhyming couplet "breath" and "death"'. This develops into a consideration of links to well-chosen contextual links both to Keats' relationship with Fanny Brawne and to the poet Chatterton and wider Romantic ideas of 'living bright and fast'. This was another secure Level 4 response.



Each of the contextual factors here arises naturally from close reading of the poem: this is the mark of 'discriminating analysis'.

Question 14

A range of sonnets is available in the prescribed poems and a good selection was picked by candidates including *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, *On sitting down to read King Lear Once Again*, *'O Solitude! If I must with thee dwell'* (which was the named poem in Question 13 but worked equally well here), and *'Bright Star! would I were steadfast as though art'*.

Answers needed to demonstrate ways in which the sonnet form contributes to the impact and effect of each of the chosen poems. The strongest responses were underpinned by a sophisticated understanding of the function and purpose of particular sonnets. Some candidates made good use of their understanding of how the sonnet has evolved over time and the different types of sonnets. Others struggled to develop their response beyond pointing out that their chosen poems were sonnets.

This was part of a much wider issue in that many across the paper appeared to struggle to analyse poetic features, focusing solely on word choices, imagery and in some cases symbolism. This is an area where candidates can move beyond the middle levels to more discriminating and sophisticated responses.

'Bright Star', too, utilises a modified sonnet form, in this case to explore the poignancy to be found in transient love. Though the poem remains loyal to the ³ quatrains followed by a rhyming couplet of the Shakespearean sonnet form, so too does it employ a volta in line 8 - much in the style of a Petrarchan sonnet. Though the first octave does introduce the problem of the speaker's desire to be "steadfast" and "eternal", the final sestet does not offer a straightforward solution - rather the final rhyming couplet is left somewhat open and ambiguous. Though the speaker aspires to the "steadfast" nature of the "star", he does not wish to experience this "in lone splendour". That is to say, immortality is not appealing if it is solitary. However, as the speaker admires the "star" a volta appears in line 8. The speaker comes to the conclusion that although he cannot attain true ^{eternal} "steadfastness", due to the transience of romantic love and life, he can remain internally steadfast, in staying true to his "fair love". It is in this manner that though the knowledge of life's fleeting nature will cause the speaker to be in a perpetual state of "sweet unrest", there is solace to be found in the fact his heart remains "yet still steadfast, still unchangeable". This is particularly poignant in the context of a young and emotional poet who we know to have been so deeply in love with Fanny Brawne, and so intimately acquainted with death. An upbringing shadowed by the deaths of both parents, and the succumbing of his brother Tom to consumption, made Keats hyperaware of his own mortality. It is perhaps in this poem that Keats perfectly encapsulates the inextricable link between pain and pleasure - The pleasure of romantic love and pain at its mortality. It is thus that the final rhyming couplet does not offer a steady resolution - rather it poses the highly erotic image of "I swoon to death". This is evocative of the French *la petite morte* -



At this point, the candidate has moved to consider their second sonnet, *'Bright Star! would I were steadfast as though art'*. This a close reading alert to the subtleties of Keats' poem, including the ways in which he moulds the sonnet form to his own purposes: 'The final sestet does not offer a straightforward solution.' Throughout, the candidate has shown themselves confident in discussing the sonnet form, avoiding laborious description and keeping close to the texts. The move to bring in the context of Keats' family and his relationship with Fanny Brawne is neatly done. This is a secure Level 5 response.



This kind of question offers an explicit encouragement to candidates to display their understanding of poetic form – not in an abstract way but as it is explored and modified in two poems.

Question 15

Popular choices of second poem included with Barrett Browning's *Grief* and Hardy's *Drummer Hodge* and *A Wife in London*. Biographical context relating to Tennyson's family history and his relationship with Hallam was common, but more could have been made of the Victorian crisis of faith. With *Grief* there were comments about the use of the sonnet form and some thoughtful responses to the weeping statue, but it felt that without any context relating to mourning and funeral practices, there were some opportunities being missed. Those who used Hardy poems were able to identify the Boer Wars as context, though there was little about Hardy's own crisis of faith.

The anaphora of the imperative "Come" resembles the intensity of the narrator's desires to bring back what she had lost. This, like Tennyson, accentuates the intensity of her grief as she longs for something that will never "come back". Furthermore, the narrator demands her loss to "come back in the speaking silence of a dream", here Christina Rossetti uses ~~an~~ ^{the} oxymoron ~~to demonstrate~~ "speaking silence" to demonstrate the impossibility of the narrator's recovery as the writer's desires are ~~blended~~ ^{refused} by her loss, and ~~refuse~~ Furthermore, "speaking silence" is a sibilance, possibly symbolising Echo's loss of voice, ~~mirroring~~ as it sounds like a whisper. In addition to this, at the end of the poem Christina Rossetti uses the alliteration of "l", ~~is~~ similarly to ~~the~~ Tennyson, to present longing and ~~over~~ everlasting grief; "Speak low, lean low, as long ago, my love, ^{how} long ago", ~~the~~ ~~further~~ ~~in~~ the rhetoric "how



In this section, the candidate turns to the second poem, by Christina Rossetti, and begins a close reading of the effects of her language choices. The attention to aspects such as sound is linked to the overall impact of the poem ('the impossibility of the narrator's recovery'). The links to Tennyson's poem emphasise the central focus of the response, though comparison is not required in Section B. This is from a Level 5 answer.



'The nuances and subtleties of the writer's craft' are shown in a variety of ways beyond word choices – and shown here.

Question 16

Analysis of Browning's poem was mostly thorough, and responses used a variety of second poems. Most candidates focused on biographical context here, particularly Browning's relationship with Elizabeth Barrett. There was some good discussion of Victorian sexual symbolism which gave depth to candidates' responses.

Colour symbolism, and floriography in the "white lilies" represents the relationship as innocent and pure, rejecting the labelling of the Brownings' partnership as inappropriate by Elizabeth's father. ~~the~~ The second conceit establishes the relationship as close to divine as the description of the symbolic lilies "growing straight" alludes to the relationship's stability as well as its pointing to "heavenly dew". In asserting this piety herself, Barrett Browning demonstrates the growing independent nature of Victorian era christianity. With the rise of evangelical practices, Browning's ~~need~~ need to define the righteousness of her own actions is representative of more ~~self-reliant~~ personal relationships to god ~~as it is~~ as it is ^{her notion that} "God only, who made us rich, can make us poor," that frees her from the "stare of worldlings".



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Examiner Comments

This extract analyses Elizabeth Barrett Browning's presentation of love in *Sonnet from the Portuguese XXIV*. The references to 'floriography' are illuminating, linked to religious movements of the period and derived closely from the poem, as the paragraph concludes with words from the final line of the sonnet to clinch the argument. This was part of Level 4 response.



Aim to address both 'how the topic is presented' and 'relevant contextual factors' in tandem – keeping both AO2 and AO3 in mind will lead to a more effective and 'controlled argument' (AO1).

Question 17

Christina Rossetti was a popular choice again this year. A measure of success here was often the use of biographical context: unsurprisingly, those who saw the poem named solely as autobiographical were more limited (one claimed it as evidence for Rossetti having had a miscarriage).

Similarly, the discussion of form was often a key marker – many labelled the poem a ‘Petrarchan sonnet’ without further consideration; those who saw the shape of the poem as similar, but intrinsically different to this form and drew some conclusions from that, were in a minority. Popular comparisons were with *At Home* – generally discussed clearly and sometimes with thoughtful comments on how Rossetti’s relationships with people and faith evolved over time – and more popularly *An Apple Gathering*. Here the contexts became more about the sexual double standard and Rossetti’s work at the Magdalene Penitentiary and her own attitudes to ‘fallen women’. *Maude Clare* also had its adherents for this approach. There were a few simplistic comments about form and structure – as on other questions, this is a key discriminator between lower and higher level responses.

May explores disappointment in a quiet and reserved manner. This inclination to withhold information was born out of the Petrarchan doctrine of reserve. This concept was established in 1827 as John Keble's 'The Christian Year' was published. Rossetti's refusal to acknowledge the subject of her disappointment and dismay is evident as she opens the poem with 'I cannot tell you how it was'. This line immediately sparks questions in the reader and successfully evokes a strange kind of disappointment in the reader as they are denied information. The structure of the poem is simple and contains little exploration of emotive language as the speaker makes simple statements like 'But this I know: it came to pass'. These factors feed into a reluctance to expose the speaker's true feelings of dismay. The poem follows the conventions of a Petrarchan sonnet; ~~that~~ it follows the established rhyme scheme and features a volta after the first eight lines.

yet, the form is disrupted by a missing final line. This suggests a sense of incompleteness and reflects the lack of fulfilment in the speaker's life. Rossetti additionally uses imagery



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This is an effective use of contextual information about the Tractarian Movement (with suitable but not excessive detail) with close comment on the poem's 'strange kind of disappointment'. This is developed during the paragraph as the candidate explores the effect of the poem's structure, noting that it feels like a sonnet but is incomplete, 'which reflects the lack of fulfilment in the speaker's life'.



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Examiner Tip

Responses which consider how a reader might respond to the poem, signposting this as here with phrases like 'sparks questions in the reader', can be helpful for both candidate and their reader, the examiner.

Question 18

Common choices of second poem included *Passing and Glassing*, *The World* and *Some ladies dress in muslin full and white*. Many responses reflected a good knowledge of *Goblin Market* with consideration of the contrasts between men (or goblins) and women, Lizzie and Laura, Laura and Jeannie, and how these related to mid-Nineteenth Century society. Those who focused simply on the contrast between Lizzie and Laura – pure and fallen women – tended to be more limited and some candidates were less clear in setting out the nature of the contrasts Rossetti deals with and why these might be of significance. Discussions of the second poem tended to be more focused on the representation of women and Victorian morality.

Rossetti uses contrast in her poems to encourage her moral perspective. In 'The World' she uses a physical contrast of day and night to symbolise the clash of purity and sexual impurity. In 'Goblin Market' the contrast is explored through the difference in the actions of Laura and Lizzie, one who gives into temptation and one who doesn't. The contrast in each poem is used to present the religious and moral perspective Rossetti held. She was heavily involved in the Oxford movement which sought to revert religious beliefs to the traditional Roman Catholic perspective. This included the strict moral opinion including on matters of sexual conduct. By using



In this opening paragraph the candidate outlines the approach they will take. Whilst the contrasts are clear, it feels as though coverage may be limited to a few aspects.

The discussion then moves to an aspect of context, Rossetti's faith; this is reasonable as far as it goes though it does rather simplify the tensions in her Anglo-Catholic beliefs. So far we have not been presented with any text.

'The World' contrasts day with night to symbolises what is pure and impure. The anaphora of 'By day' acts to emphasise the timing and its separation from night making an initial contrast. Alliteration ~~is used in~~ 'fruits, sweet flowers, and full setty' create a soft and gentle sound presenting a sense of comfort felt with day unlike the danger with night. ~~Yet despite this sense of comfort in 'day'~~ 'Day' is light and therefore is usually assumed as pure or innocent, an idea Rossetti uses. ~~Yet despite a positive depiction of day~~



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This paragraph from later in the same essay explores the candidate's second poem. This shows some understanding of Rossetti's craft here, though the analysis is not fully developed, at present only hinted at in the mention of 'danger' and 'innocent'. Overall, this was a Level 3 answer: clear but not fully analytical.



Candidates moving from Level 3 to Level 4 and above need to demonstrate more closely focused readings in their responses and to consider more analytically how effects are created – not just at word level.

Question 19

As in previous years, Twentieth Century poetry was a minority interest. This anthology and the Larkin collection attracted most answers.

This question asked candidates to explore the presentation of beauty, perhaps not an obvious Modernist theme though candidates found plenty to write about.

Mundane objects and nature. Similarly, Millay depicts a sense of beauty ~~within~~ in nature. The Fawn is illustrated as 'monstrous and beautiful' which reflects the contrasting ideas surrounding nature. The antithesis is reflective of a typical Modernist sense of alienation from



The candidate here reflects on Millay's response to the fawn, linking it, with some insight, to 'a Modernist sense of alienation'. A second extract will show further discussion of the contemporary context.

beauty he is experiencing. Ultimately, the speaker recognizes ~~the~~ but rejects the beauty of the woods as he ~~repe~~ comments 'miles to go before I sleep'. The repetition and end-stopped line reinforce his certainty of his life-affirming decision. Freud's theory of Thanatos ~~the~~ could have influenced Frost's depiction; illustrating that everyone experiences a death drive. Sympathy is evoked for the persona as despite the beauty of the woods, he decides to go back to society.



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In this second extract from the same essay attention turns to Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. There is some discrimination here in the attention to the way Frost has shaped the text, as well as a tentative link to Freud as a possible influence on the poet's thoughts at this point. Overall this response just moved into Level 4.



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Examiner Tip

Keep attention on the key words in the question to ensure that the discussion takes the argument further. The exploration here does this to an extent, though the Freudian link is rather indirect.

Question 20

The question on suffering felt to many candidates a more obvious Modernist theme. They found plenty of material to explore which could be linked, most directly, to events of the period.

In 'Stop all the Clocks', Auden emphasised how national suffering and individual suffering amount to the same thing. Auden took poetic inspiration from the 'Ode to the Duke of Wellington', which was a poem describing the national sense of mourning and grief ~~from the~~ resulting from the Duke's death. Auden references 'the Duke's ~~to~~ sense of grief by describing it in an almost hyperbolic ~~sense~~ way by stating that 'he was my North, my South, my East and West'. However, as Auden used many of literary devices shown in the Duke's 'Ode', he illustrates how an individual suffering due to the death of a loved one is just as monumental as a national figure dying, and perhaps more so as the speaker had a personal affiliation with this death, whereas those who mourned the Duke would have done so in a sense of national grief, rather than personal grief. Furthermore, Auden's use of auditory verbs such as 'moaning' reflects how instinctual the reaction to suffering is, and how it encompasses all your senses. Auden also presented suffering through his strict stanza length and the use of quatrains, as the ^{total of} 4 stanzas and quatrains could represent the pole bearers who carry a coffin to a funeral.



This candidate's choice of Auden's *Stop all the Clocks* enabled them to discuss different kinds of suffering. In this first extract, an interesting link to a Victorian poem is used to show clear understanding of both context and structure. The comment on the coffin's 'pole bearers' at the bottom of the page feels rather far-fetched but does indicate an attempt to consider different kinds of influence.

Although ~~this~~ Auden used a strict structure in his poem, going against the ^{other} modernist critics who championed the use of free verse, he does use enjambment which was a common feature in modernist pieces. This enjambment throughout the stanzas highlights how the speaker is overcome by suffering and quickens the pace of the poem, while the end-stopped lines at the ^{end of} ~~each~~ stanza ~~highlight~~ emphasises how this loss is final and their relationship will not continue.



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Examiner Comments

This second section from the answer, an attempt is made to comment on Auden's structural choices. The claim about Modernism and free verse is vague and too general to be convincing, especially as Auden is such a counter-example. The comment on Auden's use of enjambment and end-stopped lines could have been more useful but – as happens to often with this feature – it is left as a general claim without any exemplification to support it.

This was something of mixed response, as these comments show, but overall earned just enough credit for a low Level 4 mark.



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Examiner Tip

Comments on aspects of poetic craft need always to be supported by one or more detailed examples which show how this device works in *this specific place*.

Question 21

Responses on the Eliot questions were interesting to read and many showed a good grasp of intertextuality such as his classical and literary references.

A variety of contexts was employed to assist in the discussion of the presentation of sexual relationships. Weaker responses tended to identify examples and innuendo in the poems without really engaging with how the relationships portrayed might relate to the world within which they were published and to Eliot's own quite idiosyncratic views. This is perhaps due to the complex nature of Eliot's work which often leads candidates to feel that they need first to explain the elements of the poems they are focusing on but then fail to analyse Eliot's craft in detail.

Sweeney Erect, *A Game of Chess* and *The Fire Sermon* were common second choices. Useful material was made of Eliot's use of animal imagery, dehumanising both Sweeney and Grishkin; sex was presented as both a duty and a chore in the episodes from *The Waste Land*. There were relevant contextual references to the impact of war on men and in creating an imbalance between the sexes. Not much attention was paid to Modernism as a concept.

"Sweeney Erect" presents sexual relationships in no more of a positive light, with the ghostly image of this "ottery-ottery" like man creating a repulsive, sensual environment that the reader must reluctantly explore. The opening stanzas are rich with references to Greek mythology; the stories they hint at of Aeolus and Ariadne, Nessus and Polypheme instantly alert the reader of the fact that Sweeney will have no regard for his sensual partners - he exists purely to serve his own satisfaction, which is an extremely clever and relevant allusion on Eliot's part.



This extract from near the beginning of the answer shows a quite discriminating overview of the candidate's second poem, with good use of their knowledge of the literary context (which supplements the biographical aspects mentioned in an earlier paragraph). The text is used to support the 'repulsive' effect on the reader.

This note of unease is further found in 'Whispers of Immortality' when Eliot depicts "Donne" and "Cristin". One knows to "seize and clutch and penetrate" whilst the other "gives promise of pneumatic bliss". In both instances Eliot presents a very surface level sexual relationship; his work rarely seems to delve into any deeper connection or emotion that we are taught and likewise assume should accompany a sexual relationship.

Similarly in 'Sweeney Erect', Eliot's character shows complete disregard, ~~border~~ bordering on no emotion, for "the epileptic on the bed" who is evidently in immense agony. One assumes (and it is also commonly accepted) that this woman is a prostitute who has just that night had sex with Sweeney, yet even despite the lack of a romantic relationship, Sweeney's complete lack of compassion and empathy is astounding to the reader. Eliot therefore



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This second extract from the same answer is a fluent description of the two poems which clearly conveys how Sweeney's actions are 'astounding to the reader'. At this point, however, Eliot's craft is only implicit. Overall, the characteristics of this response, which include good AO1 and better AO2 work elsewhere, moved it just into Level 4; more detailed support would have taken it further.



Eliot, like some of the other poets on the paper, can give candidates the impression that they need to give detailed accounts of the literary, historical, etc, material. This can lead to work that, whilst informative, does not leave space for adequate exploration of the poetry itself.

Question 22

Candidates' choice of second poems included *A Game of Chess*, *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock* and *Preludes*. Some responses here made little or no reference to contextual factors; general comments on 'a post-War feeling of pointlessness' needed linking more closely to examples from the texts.

his "dull head". The "windy spales" refer to the faith that he's currently unable to access, but Eliot introduces an element of hope, as his "head" is still "among" said faith. He tracks this idea further when the ~~the~~ speaker now transitions to "An old man in a draughty house under a windy knob". Once again, the "wind" is representative of the faith Gerontion currently lacks, although Eliot continues this theme of hope as the speaker has progressed from his mind, "dull head", to a physical setting, "draughty house". However, this hope is quickly diminished, and Eliot conveys how a loss of faith is futile as "draughty" is less definitive than "windy", depicting how the speaker is moving further away from accessing faith. Finally, Eliot ~~is~~ reinforces how ~~the~~ ~~is~~ a loss of faith is futile as it only ends in decay when the old man transitions to "when I stiffen in a rented house". ~~The~~ The house has been an embodiment of purgatory, where, due to his loss of faith, Gerontion has had to await judgement to progress to heaven. However, "stiffen" conveys how his



In this extract the candidate sustains a persuasive argument that futility is presented through the old man's loss of faith. This is supported by close reference to the poem and culminates in the astute observation that 'the house has been an embodiment of purgatory'.

as it will always end in demise. Having moved to England in April 1914, Eliot would've seen firsthand the societal consequences of the war. As a result, he witnessed how society became divided, with a large surge of people turning to nihilism. The horrors of the war had dehumanised society, and led to a complete breakdown of moral values, and Gerontion is Eliot's condemnation of a society that has forgotten the significance of faith and its influence.



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This second extract from the same answer links the topic to society after the First World War. The information and argument are relevant but at this point the discussion has been unmoored from the text itself, except in the most general way. The following pages do redeem this somewhat through a closer examination of Eliot's comments on the 'cunning passages' of history, but this section shows how it is possible to drift away from exploring the text to description of the background. Overall, however, this was a Level 4 response, albeit at the lower end.



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Examiner Tip

Keep the context closely linked to the text!

Question 23

This anthology attracted only a handful of entries this summer, mostly on Question 24. It was noted that candidates often struggled with context for these relatively mid-Twentieth Century poems: general statements about post-war Britain, or brief notes on biographical links tended not to be very substantial. As always, the poems themselves should provide a starting point: in the case of the Tonks' poem, how her own life as well as aspects of post-war Britain were referenced here.

Larkin also speaks on the transition between childhood and adulthood. The quote, "And I, whose childhood is a forgotten boredom..." mirrors the forgotten boredom of the seasons' transitions. The 'in-between' moments between winter and spring are often forgotten too. The quote, "...feel like a child who comes on a scene of adult reconciling, and can understand nothing but the unusual laughter, and starts to be happy".



In this paragraph, the candidate moves to the second poem, Larkin's *Coming*, which is well-chosen to illustrate another aspect of transition, the seasons. Here, the way Larkin links this to the transition between childhood and adulthood is well-made, with textual support.

Contextual factors for this poem are however limited to some general comments later in the essay that 'Larkin himself... had many parental issues growing up'. Similarly general comments on the Tonks' poem earlier meant that for AO3 this aspect was more 'general' than clearly 'relevant'. Overall the knowledge of how the poets conveyed meaning lifted this just into Level 3.



To move from 'general' comments (that is, Level 2 work) on both context and craft candidates need to show some evidence of close work on the texts chosen – which means analysis rather than description.

Question 24

Candidates often selected *One Flesh* or *Nothing to be Said* as a second poem on the presentation of death. Other good choices were *When I am Dead* and *The Wasps' Nest*; one candidate made the astute choice of *Take One Home for the Kiddies*. Most answers here were again rather thin when addressing contextual factors.

the word through the tinted glasses. However, the use of the past tense verb 'was' suggests that the love experienced ~~is~~ no longer present just like the life span of the star which has died. The portrayal of death is conveyed through the death of love as it is now 'spent' suggesting love is like a flame which quickly dies out as it uses one fleeting hour and has a different meaning. Jennings' portrayal of love suggests the impermanence of it which contrasts with finality of death which conveys how all things must come to an end, however the metaphor 'the star's imperious must wait for eyes to claim it' suggests, unlike death, love can be rekindled or found somewhere else as stars light up the darkness of the night if you look hard enough, just like love can light up one's life if they look hard enough. This romantic approach of Jennings opposes to the banal and melancholy approach of 'The Movement' poets who depict the realities of contemporary society and an anti-romanticism, however, Jennings' approach seems to want to create hope for the struggling lower classes who find peace in the existence of love rather than melancholy in death, depicting how Jennings evokes death through the portrayal of love.



At this point the candidate has moved to considering how Jennings' poem *Delay* explores whether love makes us view the world 'through rose-tinted glasses'. The discussion responds well to the nuances of Jennings' poem and the claim that her approach to love opposes the 'banal and melancholy approach of the Movement poets' has some validity, though it is rather general. The standard of the argument here lifts this response just into Level 4.



As with the work of other periods, candidates on Twentieth Century poetry need to have an awareness of sufficient context – literary, social, personal – for them to draw on to make relevant connections with the selected poems in the question. This does not involve (any more than for the Metaphysicals or Medieval writers) simply learning a long list of facts, but rather reading enough of the poetry and discussing what it tells them about the times – and what it makes them ask about.

Question 25

The discussion of Larkin's poetry showed interest in his work and a good grasp of poetic technique. However, candidates often struggled to do much with the context beyond resorting to the poet's life and loves. Better answers considered social and literary aspects, such as his deliberately 'anti-phony' stance.

Mortality is a key focus for Larkin and many candidates rose to the challenge well. It was good to see that not all simply equated mortality with death – this led to some nuanced responses. Popular choices of second poem included *Going* and *Next, Please* – but *At Grass and Age* also worked well. *Next, Please* produced some confident discussions, often linked to Larkin's use of regular form and how that related to Larkin as a 'Movement' poet. Responses picked up on the sense of unfulfilled youth in *Skin* and the imminence of death in *Next, Please*, whereas in *Age* the focus was on the last lines and the concern for legacy.

In 'Skin' by Phillip Larkin he looks at how we must embrace our aging skin and ~~not~~ must 'learn our lines' and embrace our ~~large~~ mortality ~~not~~ and ~~not~~ ~~not~~ celebrate our life. Similarly in 'Next, Please' Larkin again reminds us that we must celebrate our life. He presents mortality as something natural and reminds us that instead of 'picking up bad habits of expectancy' we must make the most of each moment and our eventual death.



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This is a good example of an opening paragraph. It conveys a succinct overview of each poem with carefully chosen phrases that get to the heart of the argument that will unfold, without loading the introduction with generalities.



A controlled and clearly signposted argument is a key feature of a high level answer. It is one of the key skills that candidates can learn during the course.

rhyme scheme throughout the 6 avatrains reinforces the Movement, but also reflects the ~~monotony~~ monotony of life and the fact that life is unexciting and instead a steady sail to death and mortality. The title also reflects the monotony of life 'next, please,' being a saying often used when waiting in a line. Larkin's sister said it was phrase Larkin strongly disliked as if it forced him to speak revealing his stutter which he was deeply self-conscious about. Larkin's feeling of ~~so~~ embarrassment feed into the poem's monotonous structure which leads to ~~our~~ his mortality which he accepts. In the final stanza Larkin reminds us that 'only one ship is seeking us, a black-sailed unfamiliar,' ^{metaphorical} the imagery of the ship with the compound word 'black-sailed' reinforcing our eventual death reminds of our mortality and suggests Larkin feels we must accept our eventual demise. The language also references the Minotaur ~~the~~ myth in which Theseus, after killing the Minotaur sails home to his father Aegeus however forgets to change his sails from black meaning death to white. His father upon seeing black sails kills himself showing how the black sails come to us all in the end and we must accept our mortality.



This second extract from the same response shows the skilful way the candidate introduces enough information about the Movement with direct relevant to *Skin*, then moves back to the poem to show how Larkin's use of a tripartite structure 'reinforces the traditional structures of the Movement'. The final sentence digs more deeply into detail of Larkin's craft, with its comment on the effect of the triad.

These extracts from a very accomplished answer will show why this was awarded a high Level 5 mark.



Whilst length alone is of little merit, candidates who have developed the ability to sustain an argument over several pages give themselves the opportunity to introduce the 'fluently embedded examples' and detailed contextual links that are the hallmarks of higher level work.

Question 26

This was the more popular Larkin question and produced some very effective responses. Candidates were able to identify and explore Larkin's treatment of youth and his sometimes jaundiced views of it. *Born Yesterday* and *Lines On a Young Lady's Photograph Album* were popular choices with generally clear discussions of the contextual details involving the Amis family and Winifred Arnott. There was some variety of interpretation of *Maiden Name* – Larkin being seen as regretful or resentful, even jealous. Most responses paid close attention to the term 'unfingermarked', with some discussion of historical attitudes to virginity and the idea of 'maiden'. Both *Born Yesterday* and *I Remember, I Remember* drew responses that commented on Larkin as an unconventional or difficult character, looking to challenge social conventions. One response made an interesting contextual link to Hardy's *Thoughts of Phena*.

Larkin depicts youth within 'Maiden Name' and 'Born Yesterday', where Larkin touches on the idea of youthful beauty and what beauty entails, as well as on the mindset like between women of 'Maiden Name' and the child of 'Born Yesterday' either how or will like, and why mindless is vital in youth. Further, Larkin also touches on the theme of change, ~~where change affects~~ exploring how the changing of the someone affects a person and the life they will, as well as how change occurs in youth through growing up, which cannot be predicted.



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This opening paragraph makes a useful comparison to the example in Question 25. Whilst it is also clearly focused on the topic and introduces the two poems, it is less succinct, attempting to include rather more information than the paragraph will bear at this point in the essay. It does indicate that this is likely to be a controlled response, though at present it is not quite 'sophisticated'.



Introductions and conclusions are challenging: practising writing just these components can be useful examination preparation.

himself. Following a similar vein, Larkin was new married, although was engaged once, demonstrating his disconnect from his new married friend of 'Maiden Lane', whose name is "scattered through old life, old programs, a school prize or two", which is usually almost certainly though he sprinkled verb "scattered", reflecting movements have obtained a mundane life, being and handling mundane objects as everybody does, just as Sally Amis wishes Sally Amis to have "nothing in common to pull you off your back", which each of them often being a single sentence to highlight the fluency of Larkin's thought about what he wants for a child who was literally 'Born yesterday' as no title demonstrates, thus stripping the humanity of Larkin's ~~words~~ ^{words},



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In this second extract from the same response, Larkin's own life is mentioned as relevant to the 'disconnect' the poem's narrator now feels from 'his new married friend'. The exploration of Larkin's use of 'scattered' is an effective way to show his attention to the mundane aspects of life. A similar aspect is noted in the poem to Sally Amis, where the candidate begins to examine 'the fluidity of Larkin's thought' in his wish for the new child. This perceptive comment on Larkin's writing is part of the reason that, despite some flaws and rather less attention to context than to the style, the response was placed in Level 4.



If you have struggled to make out some of the words in this extract you will sympathise with examiners who have to decipher the challenging writing on scripts. Candidates may be spending less time writing rather than typing these days – whatever the reason, those who struggle with handwriting really need encouragement and guidance to ensure that markers can read their work so that they are not handicapped in the examination.

Paper Summary

This report is illustrated by short extracts from candidates' work. Whilst there is an indication here of the overall assessment of the response it is not possible to show all the evidence for that final mark, which will have taken into account possibly less – or more – successful work elsewhere in the essay. To supplement the extracts here teachers will be able to read complete answers to a selection of questions which will become available in the Autumn, accompanied by a commentary.

Grade boundaries

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

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

