

# Literature in English (920)

## OVERALL PERFORMANCE

95 candidates sat for this subject in 2012 and 71.58% passed at principal level.

The percentage for each grade is as follows:

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
Percentage	4.21	5.26	14.74	15.79	7.37	13.68	10.53	7.37	5.26	4.21	11.58

## CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

### PAPER 920/1 (SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER BRITISH WRITERS)

#### *General Comments*

A handful of candidates were able to write fluently and confidently but the main problem with most answers was the very poor proficiency of the candidates in English. Furthermore, many candidates tended to summarise plots, not specifically answering the questions posed, and provided poor analysis in their answers. This revealed an indication that the candidates lacked sufficient relevant knowledge on the texts used. Some answers were also partial, addressing one aspect of the question but not another. In addition, the proficiency level of the candidates also impeded their ability to understand and fulfil the needs of the questions. A handful of candidates also wrote off topic or tended to repeat points.

Generally, the questions demanded that the candidates engage with literary elements such as imagery, language, theme and character. The questions were able to elicit complex and thoughtful answers from better candidates and also allowed less able candidates to answer on a mere superficial basis without losing track of the basic requirements of the questions. On the whole, the questions addressed fundamental details that need to be mastered by candidates at this level. The popularity of different questions appears to have more to do with the text than the question. Thus, *As You Like It* and *Brave New World* which are likely less well-known were answered by far fewer candidates than well-known texts such as *Hamlet* and *Jane Eyre*.

#### *Comments on Individual Questions*

#### **SECTION A**

Candidates are required to select and answer only one question. The questions had excerpts from Shakespeare's plays *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, the poems of Keats and Hardy, passages from *Jane Eyre* and *Brave New World*. The questions focussed on the critical appreciation aspect of the plays, poems and passages.

### Question 1

- (a) This question requires candidates to identify how imagery is used to portray the helplessness of Ophelia and the value of her honour. Candidates should therefore emphasise on Ophelia's vulnerability and value of her honour using relevant imagery. For example, Ophelia's innocence and inexperience are portrayed in the use of imagery such as 'green girl', 'think yourself a baby'.
- (b) This question requires candidates to explicate on the relationship between Polonius and Ophelia, the ties of father-daughter. A number of candidates answered this question at a superficial level which focussed on the dominance or control of Polonius over Ophelia. The answers tended to be vague and general. Some were able to show that Polonius was a Machiavellian who used his control over Ophelia for his gains in court politics. In general, most candidates were able to point out Ophelia's submissiveness and the complete domination by her father.

### Question 2

- (a) This question requires candidates to analyse the lengthy speech of Phebe in *As You Like It* with regards to the revelation of how her speech betrays her feelings towards "the youth that spoke erewhile". Phebe contradicts herself throughout her speech, while in denial of her emotions for the youth, who is in actuality, Rosalind. Phebe reveals her interest and praise for the youth. She is obviously attracted to the youth, although she repeatedly claims to Silvius that she does not love the youth. Most candidates who chose this question tended to provide a summary rather than an analysis of Phebe's speech.
- (b) This question requires candidates to do a contrastive analysis of Silvius' expression of love for Phebe and Phebe's treatment of Silvius based on the extract of the play. Silvius is desperately in love with the proud and disdainful Phebe. Phebe, in contrast, disdains the affections of Silvius. Silvius expresses his love for Phebe directly using some religious imagery such as 'holy' and 'grace'. He begs for pity and she says she is willing to give that and neighbourly love, but not romantic love. Silvius is so desperate for Phebe's love that he is willing to take whatever she can give him that is left from her love for another man. Phebe treats Silvius carelessly, admitting that she found his company tedious. Candidates should be able to identify and analyse the characters of Silvius and Phebe as seen in the passage correctly. However, candidates tended to provide a summary rather an analysis of the expression and treatment of love between the two characters.

### Question 3

- (a) Candidates are required to identify and discuss two themes, with close reference to the poem. The poem contains themes such as nature's resilience and the theme of imagination and its power to transform life. The theme of nature's resilience depicts how nature teaches us a lesson in harnessing energies available at each stage of life. With regards to the second theme, imagination and the power of the transformation of life, Keats also says that imagination can transform the drab into the glorious, and thus, sustain us in all seasons whatever life may bring. This can be seen in the lines referring to the drowsy persona seated by the stove hearing the cricket's song on a wintry evening feeling the warmth of not only of the stove but also of the cricket's song and thereby transported into a summer locale so that he seems to hear the grasshopper's voice "among the grassy hills". The memory of the grasshopper's summer joy can be conjured in the mind's eye, and thus, in the drowsy person's imagination, he could be in "new-mown mead" enjoying the "summer luxury" of sun and shade, birdsong and the grasshopper's voice. The chronological flow of the seasons from spring to summer, to autumn, and finally winter, can be rearranged by his imagination so that in the depths of winter one can be transported to the joys of summer. The poetry of the earth has imbued the poetic persona with the gift of imaginative reworking of memories and recall.

- (b) This question requires candidates to look at how the poet uses the element of contrast in the description of nature. Candidates tended to describe the differences of summer and winter as symbols of good and bad, rather than Keats' evocation of warmth and cosiness. In this poem, contrast contributes to Keats' evocation of nature's beauty which never ceases. Contrast also helps the reader to see, feel, hear and sometimes touch. In other words, this device sharpens our imaginative awareness of sense effects. The primary contrast in this poem is between summer and winter but within this other contrasts are deployed. The grasshopper and cricket carry the audio-visual focus of this contrast between seasons. The beauty of sun and shade in the summer season can be seen in the first lines. The "cooling trees" provide a refuge for the birds made faint by the hot sun. The painting of summer in this poem is connected to the outdoors as we would expect. We see wide spaces in the references to "new-mown mead", to hedges, to "cooling trees". There is a warm conviviality as birds, grasshoppers (and perhaps, other living things) revel in the warmth of the season. On the other hand, the silence and cold of winter bring us indoors. There is also a sense of solitariness. The warmth must now come from a stove. And yet, there is still the natural music of the cricket's shrill song and it carries certain warmth. Our senses have been reinvigorated to see anew the attributes of nature in all seasons. Even winter's cold can be transformed to warmth via the drowsy persona's memory of summer scenes and the grasshopper's joy. Candidates who did attempt this question are tended to describe the difference between summer and winter, without discussing the subtler points.

#### Question 4

- (a) Candidates are required to discuss Hardy's use of language to show the changes time brings in the poem. On one level, the changes are physical, but on another level both the speaker and her beloved experience emotional changes as they face the passing of time. Hardy uses personifications to convey vividly the ravages of time. In stanza 3, the female speaker says that she is unable to escape "Sportsman Time" who catches up with her and as if in sport, wreaks havoc on her looks. The reference to Time as rearing "his brood to kill" conjures up the image of a pack of hounds hot on her heels to destroy her beauty. Besides her loss of outward beauty, the female speaker also suggests how time changed her standing in society. No one recalls her name when they number maidens who are "Fair and Free". The reference to "the excellencies I once enshrined", in particular, the verb "enshrined" recall that she was once much admired.
- (b) Candidates are required to identify the differences in attitude towards love as men and women age. In this poem, Hardy indicts some men for distancing themselves from women they love as they are based on the physical. 'Man', whom the woman addresses, is depicted as no longer loving the ageing 'woman'. In contrast, the 'man' is irked that the attractiveness of the 'woman' has decreased with age. Hence, his affection seems retracted. By contrast, the woman, who feels the "changes that comes with aging, may be sad, but she insists that inwardly she is the same "in my soul the very same". For her, age cannot take away her deep love for him ("one who would die to spare you touch of ill") and surely this should be worth at least a return of friendship from him.

#### Question 5

- (a) Candidates are required to identify relevant points in analysing Jane's character with her unwillingness to be compared to Rochester's "English Céline Varens". Jane fears being reduced to one of Rochester's possessions or playthings. She desires for his respect in his love for her. Candidates were generally able to identify Jane's wishes of becoming independent and maintaining her self-respect, while sustaining a more equal relationship with Rochester which did not make her obligated to him. However, many candidates tended to summarise rather than analyse.

- (b) Candidates are required to comment on the use of slave imagery in this passage. The Eastern allusion used in this passage reflects the use of Orientalism in the depiction of Rochester as the slave buyer and Jane as a “missionary” who reaches out to “preach liberty to those who are enslaved.” Jane wants to be any individual worthy of Rochester’s “regard” or respect, unlike Céline, whom Jane perceives as a liability, “enslaved” by being indebted to a man, and one who can be “purchased” with material possessions like “diamonds” and “cashmeres”. Candidates who attempted this question tended to focus on Jane’s need for independence.

### **Question 6**

- (a) Candidates are required to do a close analysis of the writer’s language and style on the depiction of Bernard and Lenina. Lenina finds the place, conditions and people of Malpais almost repulsive and not to her liking. Bernard, conversely, is philosophical about everything, and agrees to some of the things pointed out by Lenina but keeps his opinion to himself. However, his arguments reflect his attitude. Candidates tended not to talk about Bernard, even though the question asks about him.
- (b) This question requires candidates to analyse how the writer develops a harsh sense of hostility towards the people and the landscape. Candidates should look at various elements that depict hostility in both the physical and figurative sense. Candidates should point out words and phrases that describe the physical description of the setting that gives the impression of inaccessibility, the sense of hostility from the ‘host’, figurative descriptions that develop the same picture of inaccessibility, and the use of colour. Only a few candidates were able to look at the details of the landscape which made the landscape seem hostile.

## **SECTION B**

### **Question 7**

- (a) Question 7(a)(i) requires candidates to identify to whom Hamlet is contrasting himself against and the difference between them. Then, in 7(a)(ii), candidates are to identify to whom is Hamlet railing against in the respective lines of the play, and the motive and manner to which Hamlet does this. Whereas, in 7(a)(iii), candidates are to analyse how lines 24 to 41 of the play reveal Hamlet’s character. Candidates who answered this question were unable to correctly identify the person that Hamlet was contrasting himself against in 7(a)(i). And, in question 7(a)(ii), they also did not realise that Hamlet was also enraged with himself and Claudius.
- (b) Question 7(b)(i) requires candidates to explain the circumstances that led to the passage. Candidates could highlight the point that Rosalind, banished on pain of death by her usurping uncle, flees to the Forest of Arden, accompanied by cousin, Celia and Touchstone. Rosalind disguised as a young man, Ganymede and Celia as peasant girl, Aliena for safety.

Question 7(b)(ii) requires candidates to identify and explain the theme in Rosalind’s “man’s apparel”. The major theme that is highlighted is illusion. Rosalind’s male disguise enables her to speak freely to Orlando, to play their ‘wooing game’ and eventually to arrange their marriage as well as Silvius and Phebe’s. Forest of Arden is not quite the idyllic sanctuary of Charles’ and Duke Senior’s descriptions; it makes life hard for Adam and Corin and poses danger which lead to Rosalind and Celia to disguise themselves. Another illusion that can be found is the false picture Oliver paints of Orlando’s character for Charles in the attempt to end his brother’s life albeit a failure. Candidates who attempted this question were unable to identify the theme of illusion or appearance versus reality.

### Question 8

- (a) This question requires candidates to illustrate how and why Hamlet and Claudius try to outwit each other. Some candidates were able to point out not only on how they tried to outwit each other, but also the reason for them to outwit each other. However, weaker candidates gave answers that tended towards a summary.
- (b) Question 8(b) requires candidates to do an analysis of the characters, of (i) Jaques and Touchstone; and (ii) Adam and Corin. The characters each have similarities and differences between each other. For instance, though both Jaques and Touchstone come from the court, Jaques holds a more serious and higher position than Touchstone. Jaques is a lord from Duke Senior's former court. In contrast, Touchstone's character has room for more humour and wit as he is a court jester of Duke Frederick's court. Both Adam and Corin are good and kind old men who have had nasty masters. Both represent the values of the old world. Adam, in contrast, is an old retainer from Sir Rowland de Boys' household, whereas, Corin is an old shepherd in the Forest of Arden.

## SECTION C

### Question 9

- (a) Candidates are required to discuss the statement, "In Keats poetry, the ugly and the tragic outweigh the beautiful and joyful" with reference to at least three of Keats poems. Candidates can either agree or disagree with the statement with relevant examples and analysis. Candidates may refer to odes such as *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode to Melancholy* and *To Autumn*; narrative poems such as *Isabella*, *The Pot of Basil* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* or to *To My Brothers*, *Old Meg* and *To Mrs. Reynolds Cat*. Candidates may also argue that the 'ugly' and the 'tragic' are equally balanced with the beautiful and joyful.
- (b) Candidates are required to analyse the strengths of Keats' poems, with regards to his ability to feel beauty and evoke it through vivid and concrete imagery. For this question, candidates could choose from a variety of poems such as *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer*. Candidates should demonstrate that Keats is centrally concerned with beauty in his poetry. Secondly, candidates need to show that Keats was capable of expressing that concern through real and concrete imagery. For instance, candidates may provide examples of concrete imagery such as from the image of branches laden with ripe fruit from the ode *To Autumn*, or melancholy through images of 'droop-headed flowers' in *Ode to Melancholy*. Candidates referred more to Keats' references to things such as flowers, food and colour in vague and general terms. Candidates also tended to discuss beauty without showing how Keats evoked it.

### Question 10

- (a) Candidates are required to analyse the statement, "Hardy juxtaposes the joys and sorrows of life, the pleasures of youth and the pains of age" with reference to at least three of Hardy's poems. Hardy, though reminiscent of Keats' style, looks at joy co-existing with melancholy with a distinctive style of his own. Candidates could refer to poems such as *An Ancient to Ancients*, *A Church Romance* and *Lament*. Candidates tended to focus on negative points rather than the positive points. As a result, the answers given were unbalanced in their arguments.
- (b) Candidates are required to analyse the statement, "Hardy sometimes presents unusual aspects of ordinary people or gives us surprising insights into their feelings or thoughts", with reference to at

least three of Hardy's poems. Among the poems that candidates may use are *Seen By the Waits*, *At Tea*, *In the Moonlight*, *In Her Precincts* and *At the Railway Station*, *Upway*. Candidates seemed to miss on the demands of the question for 'unusual' and 'surprising' aspects brought out by Hardy. Candidates tended to broadly discuss the story and themes of whichever poems they were familiar with.

## **SECTION D**

### **Question 11**

- (a) Candidates are required to discuss in detail how characters portray various moral attitudes in *Jane Eyre*. Candidates may choose characters such as Mr. Brocklehurst, who is hypocritical and self-righteous; Helen Burns, who is patient and self-effacing; Rivers, who is zealous, sincere, but lacks a warm, human spark; and Jane, who believes in divine guidance and prays when she needs help. Jane avoids the extremes to which her other religious 'models' go. Unlike Brocklehurst, she is honest and not judgemental. When she leaves Rochester, it is not because she condemns him as immoral, but because she wants to maintain her own integrity. Unlike Helen, she is firm and self-respecting. Unlike Rivers, she is warm, emotional, loving and honest. Candidates tended to either refer to only good moral values or focus on discussing Jane's character in *Jane Eyre*.
- (b) Candidates are required to discuss how *Jane Eyre* is more than an intense love story because Bronte deals with larger issues of gender and class conflict. In answering this question, candidates may look at how Bronte uses her protagonist to explore gender and class issues. Candidates may also look at how the love story is pivotal in bringing out the themes of power and freedom, as well as the defects of educational and charitable bodies. Brontë also demonstrates how status, class and religious office confer power on men who try to mould women. Brontë also reveals among her female characters that women among themselves do not necessarily help one another and instead women of status scorn both men and women of lower classes. Hence, by carefully delineating gender and class schisms, Bronte enhances the significance of the story. A majority of candidates who attempted this question were able to pick out the salient gender and class conflicts of this novel, with varying degrees of depth and complexity. However, most candidates did not see certain aspects revealed, such as Blanche's attitude towards Jane is influenced by both class and gender factors.

### **Question 12**

- (a) Candidates are required to analyse the statement "Huxley's novel *Brave New World* is a satire" with close reference to the passage. Candidates are required to define satire, and the elements of satire in the book. Satire is a work of art, of which the objective is to ridicule. The *Brave New World* is satirical as it is unsettling, loveless and sinister, despite of all the control to sustain stability. Candidates may include the elements in the book that can point towards the ridiculous such as the decantation and the caste system, the use of *soma*, the family institution regarded as being greatly repugnant, the highly regimented social activities and the conditioning to the point of the extreme.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss how the inhabitants of the World State dealt with the need for spiritual and mental well-being and a sense of community. Candidates could discuss how stress and problems were handled using *soma* as the solution to problems. Other points that can be included are Ford as a substitute name for God, reward of *soma* to the workers and the solidarity service with its own rituals.

## **CANDIDATES' RESPONSES**

### **PAPER 920/2 (NEW LITERATURES IN ENGLISH)**

#### ***General Comments***

Candidates were able to contextualise their responses to the passage-based questions in Section A within the broader textual frame. For sections B and C, candidates who were well-prepared provided the best answers to the various questions posed. Weaker candidates were generally able to identify suitable images, but were unable to meet the demands of the question. Candidates did not fare as well with the poetry question of the *Spirit of the Keris* and Ezekiel's poem; doing poorly in poetry in comparison to narrative genres. Apart from that, other related weaknesses that affected the candidates' performance include a lack of preparation before the examination; the influence on the candidates' mastery of English in understanding the texts or excerpts and in understanding the demands of the questions, poor time management and not following specified instructions regarding the selection of question.

#### ***Comments on Individual Questions***

### **SECTION A**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) This question requires candidates to discuss the contrasting portrayal of Mariah in the given extract. The extract describes Mariah's many assets and the reason why the people in the village find her compelling. She is courteous and gentle in her ways and the manner in which she dresses makes her look seductive. The men flock to her stall not because of the food she serves but because of the way she serves the food and her whole demeanour. But more particularly, she is single and that enthralls the men. She is also beautiful, tall, graceful and well-proportioned. This explains her great appeal and sensuality. The candidate is supposed to highlight the contrastive qualities about Mariah found in the extract. For example, candidates may contrast Mariah's age with her youthful beauty. More than half of the candidates were able to answer the question adequately, providing examples of the contrast between what Mariah is and how it could be interpreted in either a positive or negative light. Quite a few candidates framed their responses by focussing on how the men and women as a group in the community had different and contrasting perceptions towards Mariah. However, a sizable minority of candidates did not understand the use of the phrase 'contrasting portrayal'. Thus, their answers focussed more on listing Mariah's physical attributes and character.
- (b) This question requires candidates to show how the community in the extract is depicted. The candidates are expected to provide details about the community, and to show the manner in which the community is depicted by the writer. In the extract, the community is described as conservative and proper. They are also curious and like to talk about others. There is tension between the external values of propriety and appearance and the emotions that reside within. This question is an easier option, and this is reflected in the quality of answers given by the candidates. In general, candidates were able to correctly contextualise the excerpt and provide a close analysis of the excerpt. The majority of candidates were able to answer the question and were able to pick out relevant details from the excerpt to support their argument. The excellent candidates used concepts from feminism to deepen their analysis. However, there were weaker candidates who misread the question and focussed on a description of Mariah and not the community.

## Question 2

- (a) Candidates are required to discuss the different portrayals of travel. Candidates are expected to discuss travel in literal, metaphorical or symbolic ways to show the different reasons why people travel. The persona and other travellers have travelled away from their homelands as an escape: escape from cold weather (“travellers come from snow-drowned homelands to a warmer shore”); escape from personal problems and confusion (“fugitives from some unexplained inner void”); escape to a world so different from their homeland (“a desperate memento of a season in paradise”). The persona too has travelled to experience “dream-drenched avenues” and to escape loneliness (“in a moment of loneliness”). The difference is that the persona travels alone compared to the other travellers in stanza one who travel with their partners (“a couple pose for pictures”). In his loneliness, he meets up another solo lonely traveller and strikes a friendship. While other travellers leave together back to a common destination, the speaker moves on to another destination, and is not certain when he will meet up with his companion again. While other travellers get home rejuvenated, the speaker and his companion leave with heavy hearts “the hollow pain” that accompanies their separation. Only one candidate attempted this question. The candidate was able to pinpoint two reasons why people travel, but was unable to meaningfully engage in the persona’s experiences of travelling.
- (b) This question requires candidates to discuss the use of diction in the poem to show the contrast between home and the travel destination. The candidates are expected to look at diction, specifically in how words, symbols, metaphors and images are used to contrast between home and travel destinations. The poet uses concrete words to convey their connotative value and the emotional response they elicit. The words “quiet skies”, “snow-drowned homelands”, “inner void” contrast the quietness and physical calm of the speaker vs the chaotic emotions he feels within himself, having to leave someone he has grown fond of in a short time. The words “desperate memento”, “dream-drenched avenues”, “sleepwalkers” and “misty travellers” suggest desperation of impending loss, and he is reduced to automaton by being uncaring where his next destination may take him (“catch the next flight out where the stars lead me”). There is a contrast of shortness of friendship vs the prolonged pain of having to sever a budding friendship.

## Question 3

- (a) Candidates are required to reveal the professor’s state of mind and feelings regarding himself after retirement. The poem reveals the professor’s feelings of being inconsequential in terms of his influence and contribution to his student’s development. The fact that the professor has to introduce himself to the students rather than vice-versa, foregrounds this message significantly. In addition the professor’s desire to reveal information about his family and himself in great details suggests an attempt to justify the impact of his life’s effort not only upon himself but on that of his family. All this is felt necessary because the poem suggests the existence of a disparity between the success attained by the professor and his student. The professor is also presented as a simpleton. His honest assessment of his life, family and his post-retirement state indicate this. Candidates are expected to discuss issues related to the professor’s feelings of being inconsequential in terms of his influence and contribution to his student’s development, as well as the disparity between the success attained by the professor and his ex-student.
- (b) This question requires candidates to discuss how language and style are appropriate to the setting. The candidates are expected to at first identify and contextualise the setting of the conversation between the professor and his ex-student. Then, the candidates are expected to provide examples of the of the informal conversation register which utilises a distinctly colloquial Indian English. The result of this is a mix of two voices being dialogically heard in a convincing manner.



#### Question 4

- (a) This question requires candidates to discuss the use of images in the excerpt provided to convey racial tension. The candidate is expected to identify suitable images and show how it conveys racial tension. Some candidates were able to provide adequate answers to the question when they were able to correctly identify the suitable images (e.g. *black cloak*, *white cockroach*, *white nigger*, *we parted at the turn of the road*, *gold coins*) and show how they are used to convey racial tension. The *black cloak* suggests a form of security protection. *White cockroach* and *white nigger* suggest scavengers which live off others and not being accepted by both the white and native communities. The image of old wall covered with *green moss soft as velvet* conveys escape from racial tension and seeking refuge in something familiar. The contrast between *fire* and *pool* reflects the incompatibility of the white and native community. “We parted at the turn of the road” shows separation and inability to be together and finally, the gold coins suggest disparity in economic and social status and the desire for material things.
- (b) Candidates are required to discuss the nature of the narrator’s relationship with Tia in the given passage. Candidates are expected to recognise that the relationship can be interpreted at two levels. The first level shows an innocent friendship between two young girls, with Antoinette getting more out of the relationship with Tia. However, the differences in the socio-economic status of the two girls led to the end of the friendship, as a result of racial prejudice and distrust.

#### Question 5

- (a) The question requires candidates to discuss Kehinde’s reaction to the loss of her child. The candidate is supposed to highlight Kehinde’s mixed reaction to the loss of her child, focusing on the range of conflicting emotions she felt after the abortion such as being traumatised by the near-death experience; pained, physically and spiritually, by her loss; angered by what she deemed as Albert’s insensitivity; engulfed by feelings of loneliness and sorrow; wrought by sense of regret for going through with the abortion and inflicted by a sense of guilt for killing the baby whom she now regarded as her father’s *chi*.
- (b) The question requires the candidates to discuss the different ways Kehinde and Albert view the abortion. As a female, Kehinde feels her personal body has been abused by the operation. She regrets the abortion as the foetus would have been a man-child with her father’s *chi*. Albert, who is a mere spectator of the event, regrets the abortion as the foetus would have been a man-child.

### SECTION B

#### Question 6

- (a) This question requires candidates to discuss how relationships between people are affected by prejudice, with close reference to at least three short stories. The candidate is expected to specify racial prejudice and use at least three short stories to show the ways it affects relationships between people. In *Heroes*, Fariza, the narrator’s daughter, holds her father in high esteem. But his shameful past action makes it difficult for him to write in the notebook given to him by Fariza. A journalist by profession, yet he distrusts words and abhors news coverage. He is defensive: “Truth? What does she know? It still irritates me, even now. Truth? Only Allah knows the truth because he can see into the hearts of all men.” His memories and past racist action gradually affect his relationship with his beloved daughter. She is confused about his silence and anger. In *Ibrahim Something*, Ibrahim has married a Chinese woman and for that he is ostracised by his own family and ethnic group. There is still hatred for him by his own family members and there is no place for him within society: “...for our country was still

big and lonely enough for people like Ibrahim and his wife to live their own lives without dreams.” His mixed marriage also helps explain his easy friendship with other ethnic members. In *Victor’s Last Wish*, Victor’s action of carefully cultivating himself into a respected Englishman has disastrous effects on his personal and professional life. So desperate is he to get a promotion and be looked up to, that he behaves in an erratic way and nurses false hopes and even goes to the extent of stealing from the company. In fleeing from his criminal deed, he falls into a tank of acid. Other stories that could be considered are *A Common Story*, *Haunting the Tiger*, *The Matsumoto Light Horse Artillery*, *Arriving* and *The Good Old Days*.

- (b) The question requires candidates to examine issues of equality and power in husband and wife relationships, with supporting evidence from at least three short stories. The candidate is expected to use the feminist perspective and framework to show the unequal relationships between husbands and wives, with the wives generally shown to be powerless and easily manipulated by the husbands. In *Mariah*, the husband intends to marry a second, younger, more attractive woman, and asks for the first wife’s permission. Pak Imam is portrayed as a man with religious authorial position but the events that follow show him to be an ordinary man who tries to use religion as legitimating his preference for a second wife. Cik Yam is shown to be powerless because her husband is relentless in his resolve. Husband-wife relationship in this story shows the ways in which men can be manipulative and women having little recourse to resist patriarchal power. *Journey* is a story of a young girl having to grow up quickly because of her parents’ domestic dilemma. The mother is pregnant with another child. Already burdened with many children, ill health, and house chores, she decides to abort the baby. The husband is shown as uncaring – while he enjoys card games with friends, the mother is writhing in pain after taking some Chinese herb to induce miscarriage. Husband-wife relationship is one of unequal status with the husband not interested in domestic activities except making his wife pregnant. In *Arrival* and *Haunting*, there are similar portrayals of powerless wives and husbands who prefer to confide with friends than their own conjugal partners. Wives are seen as serving the needs of husbands; husbands not aware/do not share wives’ loneliness/unhomeness as a result of being alienated from their husbands.

### Question 7

- (a) This question requires students to discuss the functions and significance of cultural practices in at least three poems. The candidate is expected to identify the cultural practices to be discussed, and then discuss its different functions and significance to a community. Rituals differ according to cultural beliefs. In *Ria*, for example, the speaker rebels against Malay Muslim cultural norms that one must accept death as a test from God. Instead, the speaker relives the physicality of the dead child. In *Death of Fish*, death is no longer painful but the dead is remembered by assigning proper burials. In *My Old Amah*, the absence of ritual is particularly noticeable, symbolising the alienation of the old woman from the children she used to look after. In *Eclipse* and *A Matter of Perspective*, cultural practices such as treatment for a natural event, for example, the eclipse, or the ways in which snakes are respected or used are being highlighted. The eclipse is viewed differently in the West and in the local setting. Snakes – dangerous reptiles are treated with respect. In the speaker’s homeland, the snakes are gastronomical delights. In *Ballad for Mat Solo*, amok is being highlighted. Amok is a cultural evidence of someone cracking under pressure. In this case, the persona waves a keris to show the link between culture and emotional instability.
- (b) The question requires candidates to show how poets use the English language to convey a sense of Malaysian-ness. The candidate is expected to identify three strategies linked to topics like language as in code-switching, code mixing, direct translation, use of dialects and use of non-standard language; literary devices such as metaphor, similes, symbols and imagery; setting as in name of people, places,

flora and fauna; culture such as values, beliefs, ideologies and practices; intertextuality as in allusions and references; and themes. The candidate has to then show how the poets use these strategies to convey a sense of Malaysian-ness, and discuss the relevance and effectiveness of the strategies to the portrayal of the concerns in the poems.

## **SECTION C**

### **Question 8**

- (a) This question requires candidates to discuss the extent to which the candidate agree to the statement “Nissim Ezekiel’s poems may be considered as criticisms of his society”, with close reference to at least three poems. The candidate has to state whether s/he agrees with the statement and provide relevant examples grouped around issues/questions as to whether Ezekiel was criticising Indian culture and/or society. Candidates who agree may highlight amongst others, how the poems address Indian superstitions, Indian rituals, belittling or exoticising Indian-ness, mimicking a travelogue built on Western stereotype of India, the use of dark humour and the use Indian English. Candidates who disagree may highlight amongst others how the poems, celebrate Indian cultures and traditions, centre the common people, capture the true essence of Indian life and encapsulate India in all its authenticity. Poems which candidates may refer to amongst others in their answers are *The Professor*, *Night of the Scorpion*, *The Patriot*, *Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.*, *The Worm*, *After Rain*, *The Fisherman* and *Sparrows*.
- (b) The question requires candidates to define irony and discuss the use of irony to present reality in Ezekiel’s poetry, with close reference to at least three poems. The candidates is expected to provide a definition of irony and show how irony is used to present three types of reality (from a choice of social, cultural, political, religious or physical realities), by using relevant examples from at least three poems. Candidates may discuss types of reality such as social reality, cultural reality, political reality, religious reality and physical reality; and types of irony such as comic irony, situational irony and dramatic irony and eventually support their answers by examples from the poems. Poems that candidates may refer to are *Poet*, *Lover*, *Birdwatcher*, *Night of the Scorpion*, *The Patriot*, *Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.*, *The Worm*, *After Rain*, *The Fisherman*, *Sparrows* and *Background, Casually*.

### **Question 9**

- (a) This question requires candidates to show how the author creates an atmosphere of darkness and gloom in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Candidates are expected to answer the question on a thematic level, using the theme of death or madness for example, and providing relevant examples related to the themes to show how the author creates a pervading atmosphere of darkness and gloom in the novel. Jean Rhys creates the atmosphere of darkness and gloom through the themes of the novel. This includes the theme of death which pervades the novel, from the death of Annette’s horse, Coco the parrot, and her family, to the final scene of Antoinette’s death. Madness which is inherited by Antoinette also contributes to this atmosphere. The strained relation between the blacks and whites of the island causes an environment that is not stable. Diseases and illness also pervade the novel, with both Antoinette and Rochester falling ill with fever. The structure of the novel through the intertextual connection to *Jane Eyre* also contributed to the atmosphere of darkness and gloom to the novel. Other than that, the use of images and setting such as the backdrop of colonialism, slavery and socio-economic destruction also highlight the bleakness of the story.

- (b) This question requires candidates to discuss the expectations of Rochester and Antoinette when they got married. More than half of the candidates correctly identified and discussed the different expectations that Rochester and Antoinette had when they got married. A small number mentioned the fact that Antoinette had reservations about the marriage and wanted to call it off, but Rochester was successful in convincing her to go through with the ceremony. However, very few mentioned the fact that Rochester was never interested in trying to understand Antoinette or even her culture, even before they got married. For Antoinette, her marriage offered her a chance to belong to a community (albeit the white community) after being ousted from the black community which she identified with and wished to be a part of. Marriage was the opportunity for her to get out of her dilemma of not belonging to any community and getting rid of the feelings of loss, displacement and loneliness this dilemma engendered. Marriage was a chance for Antoinette to find happiness in a world that was bleak and this is evident in the toast she gives at her honeymoon: "I never wished to live before I knew you [Rochester]. I always thought it would be better if I died. Such a long time to wait before it's over." Initially Antoinette did not want to marry Rochester because she did not trust him and felt he ridiculed her: "Then Richard came in and you laughed. I didn't like the way you laughed.... You don't know anything about me," she said. Rochester too did not want to marry Antoinette but her inheritance was a way for him to be financially secure. He went ahead with the marriage because of this and also because he did not want to return to England as the rejected suitor of a Creole woman. Even before he gets married, Rochester does not try to understand Antoinette or even her culture: "Every movement I made was an effort of will and sometimes I wondered that no one noticed this.... If I saw an expression of doubt or curiosity it was on a black face not a white one." Right from the start he situates her within a particular group which he does not wish to identify with or even comprehend.

#### Question 10

- (a) The question requires candidates to discuss how socio-cultural practices and personal beliefs determine Kehinde and Albert's sense of belonging in London and Nigeria. In London, Kehinde is lonely and feels displaced after Albert's return to Nigeria. Albert, on the other hand, feels forced to be of a lower rank than his wife when he was in London. In Nigeria, Kehinde is bound by the customs of an Igbo woman/wife which place her as a subordinate to her husband e.g. polygamy, marital concerns, gender roles, discrimination. Albert, however, longs to return to Nigeria to enjoy life in a patriarchal society. In term of career, Kehinde is unable to cope with the loss of her identity as the person she had been in London. She has to face discrimination in both places – gender in Nigeria and racial in London. Albert is not satisfied with his job in London and dreams of becoming an African chief. He is not satisfied with the powerlessness of men over women and his dependence on his wife.
- (b) This question requires candidates to discuss the consequences of Kehinde's exile from Nigeria in her attempts to reinvent herself as a liberated woman. The candidate is expected to state the fact that Kehinde was exiled from Nigeria twice in the novel and to discuss and show how successful were Kehinde's attempts to reinvent herself as a liberated woman during the two periods of exile from Nigeria. The first is when she followed her husband's emigration to England and enjoyed liberation. She worked and contributed financially to support her family. She was promoted in her career and became a successful woman, more than her husband, Albert. She enjoyed her status as a working woman and an equal partnership in her relationship with her husband. She enjoyed freedom which would not be available to her in Nigeria. The second is when she left her husband in Nigeria to return to England, hoping to be a liberated woman. She had to begin again at the bottom and learnt to be independent. She became a single mother and began a new relationship outside of marriage. She also got to reclaim her house.