

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01
Paper 1: Coursework
Portfolio

Key messages

- When framing coursework tasks, teachers should check that the wording allows candidates to meet the relevant assessment criteria.
- Teacher annotation of candidate work is an essential part of the moderation process, enabling both other teachers and the external moderator to see how a centre's marks have been arrived at.
- All relevant paper work and oral assessments should be *checked for accuracy and completeness before submission*.

General comments

In addition to this report, Centres will receive individual reports on their internal moderation of candidate work. This general review draws together the main points contained within the centre reports.

Candidates showed personal engagement with the detail of these texts in their various assessments. In general, the greatest level of choice on the part of candidates was seen in the oral assessments, where candidates had selected a character or theme for discussion. There was generally less candidate choice evident in critical essays submitted.

The majority of tasks set allowed candidates to meet the relevant criteria for each element of the Portfolio. In the critical essay, for example, tasks which asked candidates to consider a writer's use of techniques enabled them to attain marks in the higher bands. However, there was some evidence of tasks that did not seem to target the descriptors in the marking tables. It is good practice for departments to evaluate the effectiveness of the tasks they set by reference to the guidance contained in the *Coursework Training Handbook*. There is no requirement to submit the wording of assignment tasks to Cambridge, as all the relevant advice is contained in the *Handbook*.

Centres are for the most part to be congratulated on the careful way in which they prepared the coursework folders and oral assessments for submission. Any minor shortcomings in administration have been mentioned in individual Centre reports. One point worth mentioning here is the need for oral assessments to be submitted in a way that makes them readily accessible. Tracks should be named with candidate number **and name**. One CD containing the sample tracks placed in a plastic or paper sleeve should be sufficient. Written assignments should **not** be submitted in plastic covers or bulky card folders.

The most effective teacher annotation is in the form of:

- ticking valid and thoughtful points in the body of assignments
- concise marginal comments pointing out strengths and weaknesses, with some reference to specific band descriptors.

Teacher annotation helps to secure more accurate marking within departments and to make the process of moderation more accountable and transparent. Written assignments must not, therefore, be submitted without such annotation. The topics of Marking and Annotation are covered in Sections 5.5. and 5.6 in the

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Coursework Training Handbook. This is essential reading for teachers new to the syllabus and to those uncertain of the syllabus requirements.

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Paper 0408/02
Paper 2: Unseen Texts

Key Messages

- Strong answers to both the poetry and prose questions made a clear and direct response to the writing.
- The most successful candidates used the bullet points to select relevant material and to structure their answer.
- Candidates performed well when they responded to the imagery of the poem and engaged with the portrayal of the 'wicked old woman'.
- An awareness of the effects of the setting and of the author's methods of creating suspense were the hallmarks of success in response to the prose passage.

General Comments

Most candidates chose the prose rather than the poem. There was much evidence that candidates had been carefully prepared for this examination and understood the importance of referring to the language of the text in both genres and of using supporting evidence. There were intelligent comments on imagery, diction, structure, tone, setting, pace and point of view.

In answers to the poetry question, candidates fared well when they explored the imagery the poet uses to describe her imagined existence when she is old and responded to the implications of these images. The strongest answers tackled the more abstract ideas in the final seven lines of the poem. There was a tendency for candidates to superimpose their own ideas about how an old person should feel, rather than closely reading the portrayal of old age in the poem.

The prose passage, with its 'bullying' theme clearly resonated with candidates and there were engaged and perceptive responses. The key discriminator proved to be an observation of the sinister qualities of the setting which foreshadow the attack on Anna. Some responses showed sound understanding of the content and expressed empathy for Anna but tended to narrate and describe rather than analyse the author's effects.

A sensible amount of time had been devoted to reading and planning. In response to both questions, however, there were a few speculative answers which tended to discuss the text in a generalised and thematic way rather than engaging closely with the text itself.

There were very few brief answers or infringements of the rubric.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 (Poetry) *I'll be a Wicked Old Woman* by Radmila Lazić

The most successful answers adhered to the instruction to explore the vividness in the poet's portrayal of her imagined old age. Candidates responded to the contrast between the poet and the 'regular' old woman and noted the 'spikiness' of the scarecrow and old crone images.

Candidates commented on the connotations of the witch and the mother hen images and the resonances of the simile 'angry as a bee'. They responded to the depiction of the poet as an attractive young woman who tamed the powerful and wild 'colts and stallions' of her youth, seeing this not as something she regrets losing but as a sign of how she means to carry on living. The 'sharp' imagery was picked up again in the 'sticklike'

and 'toothpick' images and the wholesomeness and maturity of the well-baked bun image contrasted with the sesame seeds, which show the woman still has the ability to unsettle and annoy.

Less successful answers undervalued the vivacity in the portrayal. Several thought that the woman would behave in an inappropriate manner for an old person and that she was vain and craved attention. One commented 'I have never seen an old woman boogie,' and assumed that the 'young smarties' were disapproving despite the fact that they shout and applaud. Many thought that she would be lonely, bitter and vulnerable, responding to a stereotype of old age that is far from the ideas in the poem.

The candidates who wrote about the ending of the poem did so in a thoughtful and interesting way. Many thought the tone was nostalgic and that the woman did not accept old age, preferring to 'catch her soul' in the past. The strongest answers perceived that the tone of these lines was more reflective and the meaning more complex, referring to the tough qualities of the images from nature the poet uses.

Question 2 (Prose) from *With Your Crooked Heart* by Helen Dunmore

Strong answers here commented fully on the implicit threat in the description of the setting. Candidates responded to the labyrinthine qualities of the lanes, walls and hedgerows which make Anna seem both trapped and isolated. The personification of the trees, the wind and the mention of thunder were all seen, perceptively, as foreshadowing the cowardly attack. Even the ponies (usually portrayed as cute and friendly) were judging her.

The care with which Anna chose her route and her later numerical calculations of time and distance were considered as strong characteristics of the author's creation of tension and suspense. Successful answers closely observed the animal imagery ('brays...beast') surrounding the boys and that 'something' inhuman turns into 'someone' all too human. Attention was paid to the effective use of sound in the attack with 'silence hisses with wind' linking back to the initial environmental menace.

There were detailed commentaries on the depiction of Anna's fear conveyed by the short sentences, the repetition of 'run', the heart beat, the use of 'flying', the contrast between her hopes of safety and the boys renewed attack.

Much empathy was expressed with Anna's feeling of torment as shown by her relief that she would be free for exactly 'sixteen hours and forty-five minutes' and in her understanding of the reasons why Billy Arkinstall is a bully. There was almost universal comment on the cliff-hanger ending.

The very best answers responded to the narrative viewpoint, observing that the third person narrative allows us to see things through Anna's eyes, yet also creates a sense of voyeurism along with an inability to help her, leading the reader to feel guilt and complicity.

Less successful responses sometimes lost contact with the text in speculative comment about the bullies, their motives and the reasons why Anna might be a victim. Some answers became bogged down in describing the setting, without being able to comment on the use Dunmore makes of it. In such answers response to the suspense tended to be elementary. Certain candidates felt what the author wanted them to feel, 'Anna is a prey in a world of hunters', but were unable to explain *how* the writer had made them feel that way. Many responses were a mixture of central points with analysis and narrative or descriptive passages.

In general there were many lively and intelligent answers with some impressive instances of the ability to combine a sophisticated overview with some detailed analysis of the text.

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Paper 0408/03

Paper 3: Set Text

Key Messages

For success in this component candidates need to:

- answer the question set
- explore the detail of the printed extracts in passage-based questions
- integrate much well-selected reference to support their responses
- allocate 45 minutes to each of the two questions in this 90-minute paper.

General Comments

There was clear evidence that candidates had enjoyed the text they studied. They knew the text in at least some detail.

The strongest essays were those which engaged with the key words of the question from the start and kept them in focus throughout. These essays supported points made by judicious use of quotation from the text. By contrast, the least successful essays made unsupported assertions without achieving a clear focus on the question.

In the **Section A** extract questions, high-scoring answers explored in detail the writing within the context of the actual question. Answers which simply worked through the extract mechanically without regard to the question did not gain high reward.

For the **Section B** essay questions, candidates need to have a detailed knowledge of their chosen set text. Without adequate detail comment tends to become generalised and assertive.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 5

Most candidates were able to explore the reasons for the narrator's 'trembling with anger or sorrow, he didn't know which'. The more successful answers were able to relate this to incidents described later in the story. Indeed they picked up on the flashback in the second half of the story to the narrator's younger days and the portrayal of the close relationship between him and his aunt. Some responses usefully considered the significance of the title in relation to the extract and its position within the wider story.

Question 11

Stronger answers deployed a range of textual reference to support their argument. They were able to make the distinction between the literal journey on the train and in the taxi but also the old man's metaphorical journey. They explored his sense of growing isolation and his frustration at the changing world around him. In particular, they referred in detail to the patronising and racist way he was treated by officials. Less successful responses relied on overly generalised comment, unable to offer telling textual references to support their points.