

Examiners' Report  
June 2018

GCE English Literature 9ET0 03

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# Introduction

Examiners on this paper saw the full range of achievement again this summer, with only a handful of really weak responses and a pleasing number awarded full marks. Most candidates showed confidence in approaching the poems and in addressing the challenges presented by the paper.

Section A, with its unseen poem, tests different reading skills to Section B, where candidates have the opportunity to select their own second extract or poem. Achievement was broadly equal across the two sections, though some candidates appeared more confident with their Section B texts than with the poems studied in the Forward Anthology, where a number of idiosyncratic readings were argued. Each Section on this paper carries equal marks and both need adequate preparation. For the unseen poem, this could include exploring the strategies in the Pearson Edexcel resource *Unseen poetry Preparation Anthology* available to centres in the teaching and learning materials section of the Pearson Edexcel website.

More successful candidates succeeded in offering readings relating to the poems as a whole rather than leaping straight into a close, 'word' level, analysis of the poems they were working with. This allowed them to locate their discussion of specific extracts and examples effectively in relation to broader possible meanings of the poems. Less effective responses tended to take refuge in statements about 'poetic effects' without any overt sense of the meaning of the poems. There was, again, a rash of reference to features such as enjambment, caesura or plosives and poets' use of them, frequently without exemplification (and in cases where examples were provided these were sometimes not actually caesuras or plosives at all).

Poor handwriting handicapped a number of responses. When an examiner has to read the response at word level, it is difficult to follow an argument. Cramped writing is a particular problem for examiners, as even the ability to enlarge the response on screen is of little help. Where teachers become aware that this is likely to be an issue they are strongly advised, for their students' sake, to suggest ways of addressing this.

There were again a few rubric infringements again this year, despite this featuring in last year's report. A handful of candidates compared the Section B named poem with one from the *Poems of the Decade* Anthology. A few more attempted to answer one of the questions on Keats (Q13 or Q14) with a poem from the *English Romantic Verse* (set for Q11 and Q12). The instructions for each text in Section B quite clearly state that the poems used must be from the prescribed text for that question - a list of the set poems is provided in the Source Booklet. Teachers are advised to make this very clear to students in advance of the examination.

## Section A

Candidates were required to compare the unseen poem *Growth* with one of two names poems from the *Poems of the Decade* anthology. Students on the whole have been successful at avoiding narratives on the poems and instead engaging in analysis and evaluation. The most successful answers integrated comparison throughout the exploration rather than treating the poems separately. Most candidates responded well to the unseen, though some skipped key sections such as the description of the narrator's evening walk. Weaker responses often plunged immediately into technical details (often without examples) at the expense of overview, or to summarise rather than analyse the poems. Better answers frequently used their knowledge of the anthology poem to scaffold a comparison to the unseen text.

A purposeful introduction, with a sense of narrowing down the focus of the response from the key words of the title, is essential in creating the 'controlled argument' required for Level 4 and above. Rather than beginning with structure or techniques, it is far better to commence with the big picture. What is happening, where and to whom? How do you know? This places detailed analysis in the context of an overview.

Careful reading is demonstrated in the use of quotation. Successful candidates read and quoted the sentences, not the lines; they quoted carefully: it's 'waiting for the past' not 'waiting in the past'. Poetry should be set out as verse. This should help students see reasons for line breaks, for example in the final two stanzas of the unseen. Here is a use of enjambment worth commenting on:

Years later, it would come down  
to me that Grannie's death had  
been hidden away, as cancer

still was then, a guilt in women.

Mid-level responses tended to identify features of structure, form and language without attempting to show why the writer used these features to convey meaning.

Murray's poem worked well as a pairing with both the anthology choices. Candidates mostly chose to discuss the first stanza, the child's walk or the ending; few addressed the advent of the 'rider'. The final line of the poem was often looked at in isolation, and seen as a 'rhetorical question' being spoken by the persona, rather than 'One man'. Many candidates saw 'the peak of war', running out of petrol and the 'darkness' as merely metaphorical, and failed to see the possibility of a literal meaning. Less successful responses to either question focused purely on structure or punctuation at the expense of connecting with the poetic voice or language.

A large proportion of responses effectively analysed connections between and across the texts, applying more than a simple comparison and contrast; even lower-scoring responses attempted to draw an evaluative, or at least concluding 'bringing together', end to their responses. For the highest levels, there was a sense of a sophisticated, critical and integrated intelligence to the open tasks set with some impressive readings of the unseen piece in particular.

A number of higher-level responses analysed the phrases 'waiting for the past' and 'a guilt in women' successfully. Looser readings sometimes included unnecessary and unhelpful speculation, for example that the patient in *A Minor Role* was suffering from mental illness. Whilst that is a possibility, it is more helpful to embrace the poem's ambiguity and uncertainty and concentrate on the effects of phrases, such as 'the genres of misery'.

## Section B

Candidates usually showed a good basic grasp of their chosen texts and an interesting range of approaches to contextual relevance. Chaucer, the Romantic poets and Rossetti were the most popular choices again. It was pleasing to report a handful of entries for the first time on Medieval poetic drama; these were often very well informed. Now that the paper is established, it is hoped that more centres will have the confidence to explore less popular text choices, where candidates this year often engaged in genuine debate with their chosen poems.

Successful answers often related details from the chosen poems to specific features of movements such as Romanticism, though precise use of historical or biographical material also proved effective. Weaker responses tended to offer vague general comments on context, whereby the French Revolution (or the industrial one), for instance, explained Keats's melancholy. General comments about the way the world was also do not take candidates very far: some comments on the patriarchy to contextualise Chaucer and Rossetti made the periods sound almost indistinguishable. Candidates are reminded that contextual influences should enhance their analysis rather than be there as a history lesson. Also, whilst biographical context can be useful, it is often not as relevant and useful as literary or social influences on poets. Sorties into Larkin's own love life as context for Q26, for example, tended to be unhelpful and over-generalised. There was a lack of nuance in thinking about how this might inform readings – a similar problem emerged also with Donne and his marriage, Rossetti and her faith and Keats and his TB. It meant that for some answers that candidates' contextual learning had predicated their responses and interpretations of poems. It is worth pointing out that well-prepared and creative candidates need to be able to respond to what they are asked to do rather than writing answers to the questions they wish they had been asked.

Many students compared the two poems in response to section B even though AO4 is not assessed. This is not necessary, and some could have chosen better poems to use in a response to the given question. Students could perhaps have gained more marks using the time they spent comparing, making evaluative and critical comments instead. There were some very good examples from students who had written on, and analysed, the named poem first and then did the same for their chosen poem, without any comparison.

In the commentary on Section B, it is not practical to provide extracts for every question, though extracts are provided for most. It is hoped that the samples provided will adequately illustrate key aspects of responses to the texts. In the main they illustrate more successful responses to demonstrate ways candidates can achieve on this paper. Centres are also directed to the standardisation exemplars and other training materials provided by Pearson Edexcel for further examples.

## Question 1

Candidates who chose this question had mostly prepared themselves well with the most useful parts of the Anthology poem to explore when analysing technique. Successful answers considered the range of responses to illness, not just the central figures in each poem. Higher-level responses demonstrated a more sensitive analysis of the ways in which Fanthorpe presents the struggles of someone caring for a loved one. Better responses picked up on the theatre conceit, indicated by the title, and explored Fanthorpe's use of the stage as metaphor. The strongest responses focused on the speakers in the poems, some using the first person plural to carefully evaluate and suggest how readers respond to the poems' emotional themes (for example, 'the poem may ask us to consider how we react to serious illness ourselves').

Candidates mostly made successful links between the poems – particularly when considering the ways in which serious illness may be a taboo or hidden subject. The stronger responses picked up on the subtleties on the responses of the speaker in *Growth* as a child and as an adult reflecting on the incident with greater knowledge; these responses explored the techniques of Fanthorpe with some skill, linking them closely to possible meanings; the stronger responses made good connections about societal attitudes to illness. Understanding Murray's title and why the man got punched were other markers of strong understanding.

The careful structuring of a legitimate argument, for example, with separate paragraphs on isolation, guilt and fear, engaged with the question in a sophisticated way. These responses were often more effective than the more rigid framework approach working through language, structure and so on, which whilst providing good scaffolding for weaker candidates, is perhaps not the most effective structuring of an academic response for the top candidates. Comments on poetic form and structure (in particular metre, stanza length and rhyme schemes) tended to be formulaic and of little [value](#) unless linked specifically to the question or other elements of the poem.

This candidate establishes an overview from the start, accompanied by close comparison.

In Murray's 'Growth' and UA Fanthorpe's 'A Minor Role' both likewise explore responses to serious illness. Both poets create a contrast between the distanced observer - as the speaker is in 'Growth' - and the near observer to the illness - as the speaker is 'A Minor Role'. Through the interplay of different perspectives on the serious illness, both poets thus ~~the~~ present the differing impact, ~~and thus, responses,~~ yet profound impact serious illness' have on the surroundings, and thus the differing responses to the illness.

Firstly, both poets distinguish between the responses of those witnessing the illness from distance ~~and~~ against those in proximity to the serious illness. In 'Growth', the speaker is largely "barred" from the serious illness whereas in Fanthorpe's poem, the speaker serves the vital yet "minor role" ~~of~~ within the illness, showing the speaker's proximity. In 'Growth', Murray establishes the distance of the speaker from the serious illness in the opening quatrain, "my friendly Gran/was now mostly barred from me / (-) rules away", establishing <sup>the speaker's</sup> ~~his~~ response to the illness as being from a distanced perspective

Murray's use of ~~the juxtaposition between~~ 'my friendly Gran', implying closeness, particularly through the possessive pronoun "my" and the colloquial, familial abbreviation "Gran", juxtaposed with "barred from me/(:-)/piles away" creates a dichotomy between past closeness and the newfound distance as the "Gran" is "accomplishing her last death" suggesting this distancing is a response to the illness. This contrast is furthered in Murray's use of the past tense and "One who'd been" and the indefinite pronoun "One" suggesting an alienation as a result of the illness. Thus, though this Murray presents the speaker as responding to the illness from a distanced perspective. Contrastingly, ~~the~~ Faulkner's speaker is in very near proximity to the speaker, established in Faulkner's extended allusion to theatre encompassing the opening and ending stanzas of the poem. Opening with "I am best observed on stage" establishes the extended metaphor that comes to symbolize the serious illness. Although arguably suggesting a distance due to the nature of theatre, audience <sup>physically</sup> separated from performer, the speaker is "on stage" thus allowing the reader to infer their proximity to the speaker. Yet, the use of the stage possibly alludes to other distanced "observers" to the illness as creating, as in 'Growth', a dichotomy between the distanced response to a serious illness and the proximity. Indeed, Murray too presents both distance and close perspectives in the

mentions of the mother, "my mother was nursing her", who is playing the role 'Minor Role' in this poem. Thus, in establishing the dichotomy between distance and proximity with regards to a serious illness, both authors thereafter explore the differing responses to a serious illness between these two perspectives.



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Examiner Comments

The response builds on a clear grasp of the central ideas in each poem, using the titles as a jumping-off point. An appreciation of the theatre motif enables effective illustration of Fanthorpe's craft and leads to an effective link to the voice in Murray's poem. Text is used extensively in support. The response went on to achieve a Level 4 mark.



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Examiner Tip

Always consider the poet's choice of title: it is more than a mere label and can provide clues to the content and tone of a poem.

This extract from the middle of a Level 5 answer shows the candidate developing a close analysis of Murray's language

With the move to the second speaker - showing above to be the 'gran' - Murray's style becomes much more sensual, imaginative, as he endeavours to mark the experiential nature of the illness, as opposed to what ~~setting this against what was the 'cool dust'~~ It is 'cool dust', 'car lights', and the 'burnout streaks from the stars that people this narrative, each equally immediate and each with a <sup>notable</sup> degree of intensity and difference. The combining factor seems to be in the idea of subjection. While affecting on itself, this is nevertheless set off against an overarching tone of wonderment and freedom - the latter being ~~for~~ furthered through the engagement between stanzas 3 and 4 - which ultimately works to assure us of a sense of vigour, ~~of~~ and vitality; Murray produces a consciousness reduced to its base level - that is, a mind that can attend only to the most immediate and direct articles of experience, ~~and~~ - and yet shows it to produce something of beauty nonetheless - consider the emotional worth of, 'the sky trees, pencilling across the pale ahead.'



The candidate develops a critical and evaluative argument by analysing closely the shift in tone in *Growth* as the child sets off on the walk home. Detailed support is provided from some of Murray's striking images such as 'the sky trees' in a sophisticated passage at the end of the paragraph.



Read (and listen with your inner ear) carefully for those points where a poem can change direction or tone. These can form the basis for a discriminating response. Another example can be found in the final line of Fanthorpe's poem and in the dramatic half-line that precedes it.

## Question 2

Successful responses to this question established the big ideas first, nailing down the central concept of Dunmore's poem, that of the speaker addressing a younger version of herself. There are various ways of explaining this, though seizing on the pronouns in the poem was not necessarily the best. Candidates were mostly proficient in exploring Dunmore's language and imagery; again the best responses worked through the poem logically, capturing the sense of the nine-year old being startled by her adult self, and the adult self gradually deciding to take her leave. Stronger responses were alive to the tone of nostalgia and could see that the 'scared lanes' and the 'cess pit' pointed to darker aspects of being nine that added complexity to the older voice's regret for the lost energy and fearlessness. They could also see the combination of confusion and isolation of the child in the unseen with his fearlessness and draw effective connections between the two poems.

Most candidates were able to identify suitable areas for comparison between *Growth* and *To My Nine-Year-Old Self*. Lower level responses often relied on spotting techniques for comparison. Middle level responses drew thoughtful elements of comparison relating to childhood incidents, but the overall development of the argument tended to be fragmented. There were also some very strong response to this question; these tended to place greater focus on the 'adults looking back' part of the question to develop a thoughtful, critical and conceptual analyses of the poems, such as feelings of regret over the past or ways that events in our past shape our current selves.

This extract from the beginning of a response illustrates the limitations of generalised claims about structure.

Both 'Growth' by Les Murray and 'To my nine year old self' by Helen Dunmore interconnect and circle ~~them~~ the theme of 'looking back on childhood incidents'.

Les Murray structures her stanzas quite regularly with regular punctuation to allow the poem to flow ~~quite~~ quite naturally. However, there are also uses of enjambment i.e. stanza 3. In addition to this the stanza is also smaller and less structured. This could suggest ~~her~~ faded and not so clear patches ~~at~~ when looking back at her grandmother's battle with cancer in the speaker's childhood.

Whereas in 'my nine year old self' the structure of the poem is similar in that stanza length is ~~quite~~ relatively regular.

However, as the poem proceeds there is a decrease in stanza length to where the final stanza consists of a single sentence with 3 lines. I believe the last stanza especially through the words 'peeling a ripe scab from your knee to taste it on your tongue' reflect a typical symbol of childhood but also reflect recovery and 'growing back'. This suggests wider meanings and suggests the speaker is reflecting back on her life for reminiscence and healing.



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Although the introduction addresses the question, the response then plunges into some fairly unfruitful comments on punctuation and enjambement. The final section of the paragraph redeems this to some extent by closer analysis the text. The answer went on to achieve a mid-Level 3 mark.



It is rarely helpful to commence the analysis with structural details. Abler candidates were able to explore stanza structure, using terms such as tercets and quatrains, more usefully once an overview of the poems had been established. The concept that many seemed to need when exploring free verse - lineation - was almost never mentioned.

This extract from the middle of a response reveals a developing awareness of shifts in tone, rather compromised by some vagueness of terminology.

However, 'the narrator, is as the authoritative voice, knows the boundaries found when looking back at herself, knowing there is nothing in common / beyond a few shared years. This caesura in the middle of the stanza builds up the tension felt by the reader before reaching the pivotal turning point; 'I won't keep you then.' What follows after is the ~~growth~~ reality of life, which is still partially hidden from childhood youth. She is still seen to 'lunge ~~over~~ out over the water,' exploring her childhood actions, but now also ~~hides~~ <sup>hides</sup> 'down scared lanes / from men in cars after the girl-children'. This is interpreted as the decay of innocence and purity found in the youth; a universal message or standard exploring the pattern which is followed after childhood and facing reality.



The candidate identifies a turning point in Dunmore's poem, though (like many) the line break is inaccurately described as a 'caesura'. This is used to develop an argument about the difference between the innocence of the child and her adult self. The argument is uneven but overall the response merited a Level 4 mark.



Be clear about any technical terms you wish to use, illustrate them if you name them and explain what effect you think the device has on you as a reader. Too many candidates use a specific term like 'volta', which applies to sonnets, for example, to describe any turning point or change of direction in a poem.

### Question 3

It was a pleasure to welcome the first appearance of answers on Medieval poetic drama. This question produced strong responses, marked by a secure knowledge of the context.

This extract from a Level 5 response demonstrates a secure grasp of the social and religious context integrated with close analysis of the medieval poet's craft.

~~Therefore,~~ The opening speech of the play performs powerful spiritual and social work ~~as~~ in its presentation of the everyday lives of the shepherds. Their complaints about

the 'weathers ... cold' are emphasised by ~~the~~ the  
 of stanzaic poetry ~~the~~ and verse form. The ~~type~~  
~~of~~ use of a nine-line stanza, with internal  
 rhymes in the first four lines, has been attributed  
 to a particularly skilled ~~of~~ medieval dramatist  
 known by critics as the 'Warkfield maker'. The  
 stresses on words such as 'napped' and 'chapped'  
 helps to emphasise the plight of the rural shepherd,  
 with the plosive consonance of the 'p' sounds helping  
 to ~~more~~ linguistically enact the harshness of  
 his conditions with its harsh and biting language.  
 In conjunction to complaints about the weather,  
 there is also a clear focus on the corruption of  
 the local 'gentlemen'. ~~The~~ Again, ~~the~~  
~~the way that the~~ ~~verses~~ ~~verse~~ ~~form~~ ~~is~~ ~~used~~ ~~to~~ ~~emphasise~~  
~~the~~ ~~harsh~~ ~~conditions~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~shepherds~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~corruption~~  
~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~local~~ ~~gentlemen~~ ~~is~~ ~~emphasised~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~triplet~~ ~~'napped',~~ ~~'fortaxed'~~  
~~and~~ ~~'rammed'~~ ~~the~~ ~~again~~ ~~demonstrates~~ ~~skilful~~  
 use of the verse form as a means to lay emphasis  
 on the harsh conditions that these shepherds face  
 in their everyday lives, with the ~~of~~ cutting sounds  
 further expressing the <sup>difficult</sup> harsh nature of the conditions.



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 Examiner Comments

Close attention to the language, including effective  
 comment on stanza form and rhyme, indicates  
 why this is a critical and evaluative response to the  
 text.



Detail counts: when making claims about the impact of rhyme, rhythm or structure, make sure these are clearly illustrated.

## Question 4

Responses to this question again demonstrated a secure grasp of the texts, though they tended to have a bias towards contextual information, crowding out exploration of the writer's craft. One candidate chose to write about a second extract from a play not on the specification list – this limited the possible achievement.

This extract is from the opening of well-informed answer which is rather overburdened with background material.

The Mystery Plays, which originally emerged from liturgical Christmas plays, were usually performed at the east of Corpus Christi. The Noah's Flood play, from the Clerk's cycle, presents the reconciliation of God and man.

Noah is presented as a character who is loyal to God throughout the play. As a result of being a devout follower of God, Noah and his family are rewarded as they are protected from the flood. The author of this play, who remains anonymous, depicts Noah's relationship with God through the language and imagery used but also through the other poetic techniques such as rhyme and structure. This ~~fully~~ relationship is clear in lines

300-331 but also in lines 247-283. Firstly, in lines ~~300-331~~ 300-331 the poet uses ~~the~~ language and imagery to depict Noah's loyalty to God. For example Noah says ~~the~~ 'I thank thee' and obeys God's instruction saying 'I will do thee honour' and that 'thy bidding shall be done in haste'. The way in which Noah agrees to do what God says and the emphasis on the speed with which he agrees to do it is significant as it emphasises just how loyal Noah is to God and how he is greatly concerned with keeping God happy and ~~willing~~ <sup>obeying</sup> to his demands. He also describes God as being in 'majesty' and uses words like 'grace' to associate with him which further emphasises how he admires and respects God.

In this passage Noah's relationship with God is also presented as respectful. For example, in return for saving him and his family from the flood, Noah offers God a 'sacrifice'. He says 'for of these beasts that he hid' he will 'offer' this 'store'. Noah explains that he wishes to sacrifice in order to 'honour thee'. This is



None of this information is completely irrelevant but the contextual information could have been much more profitably integrated into the body of the answer. Only on the second page does the account focus on the question; it now becomes 'clear' and 'relevant' (Level 3). The response gradually builds up a detailed picture from this point with sufficient control and discrimination to earn a low Level 4 mark.



Keep general comments on aspects, such as the overall function of the text, brief and relevant. Ensure that you establish how you will address the key words in the question from the start of your answer.

## Question 5

Of the two questions on *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*, this was the more popular and tended to be answered more successfully, in part at least to the more obvious elements of context that could be incorporated. Knowledge and understanding of the text was generally good. Many candidates identified the different elements of 'maistrie' in the given passage (the Queen's maistrie over the knight, the loathly lady's gaining of maistrie over the knight and so on) and used the passage of the fight between Alisoun and Jankyn as the other passage, which led to some fruitful areas of analysis. Weaker responses lost sight of Chaucer's role behind the text, focusing instead on Alisoun's attitudes to maistrie and how this undermined contemporary patriarchal social structures. Better responses saw Chaucer as either critiquing or perpetuating contemporary attitudes to male dominance (or both). The very best responses then went a step further to consider some of the more conceptualised challenges to maistrie, such as the manipulation of the Arthurian romance/fairy tale form, or the complex relationships between Chaucer, his characters and maistrie.

Some responses made reference to the 'anti-feminist' nature of Chaucer's time. A few candidates had refined this to 'proto-feminist' but a fixation on 'feminism' was not necessarily helpful. It was more rewarding to see candidates engage with gender alongside questions of power and status relating to patriarchal structures such as the Church.

Candidates writing about Chaucer sometimes seemed to find it more difficult to explore AO2 and tended to translate or paraphrase quotations rather than analyse the text. Teachers might find it helpful to make Chaucer's language play more explicit for students.

This opening is the beginning of a focused response, informed by contextual details, though these are related to the *Prologue and Tale* in a rather sweeping manner.

Throughout *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, ~~Chaucer~~ Chaucer uses his speaker as a source of the female desire for mastery over their husbands. In lines 195-215 and 1037-1057, the wife demonstrates her views on wanting to be the dominant partner in marriage, despite the extremely patriarchal context of the 1300s, in which Chaucer was writing.

To begin with, the wife uses the knight in her tale to demonstrate an example of females getting what they want. 'Wommen desiren to have sovereyntee' is the conclusion that the knight reaches. The use of the verb 'desiren' illustrates that it isn't what they are always able to have. Due to the societal views of women's role in marriage, it was always ~~man~~ the man who had the control. This is illustrated in Theophrastus' *Golden Book of Marriage*, which was written by St Jerome.



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This is the introduction to a Level 3 response. It is clearly expressed and the contextual information is detailed. At this stage, however, aspects such as Jerome's views on marriage are yet to be made directly relevant to the text.



Aim to keep the question and its application to the text central, even while relating these to the context.

For comparison, these pages from a stronger response show the candidate weaving the context into exploration of the text. There is clear awareness of 'the literary construct of Alisoun'. Level 5

"Maistrise" in 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale' is presented as a constant battle for whether men or women - or husband or wife - should have power over one another in lines 1037-1057 and lines 431-449. Chaucer presents the battle for "maistrise" or "sovereyntee" as constant, however more overpowered by women due to their manipulation of men and how they breathe them if they do not allow their women "maistrise". This links to how St Paul's teachings in Corinthians 7 suggest ~~not an~~ husband and wife are equal and each "own the other's body", but Alisoun ignores this and only says the wife should

have "sovereignty".

Firstly, in lines 431-494, Chaucer presents the ~~thats~~ literary construct of Alison as manipulative and attempting to remove Janikin's masculinity in order to gain power and control over him. She ~~had~~ ask him ~~to~~ "how mekely lookest Wilkin,oure sheep!" which implies she believes her husband should be equally as docile and follow her like a "sheep". The use of animal imagery by Chaucer could show that the wife wants her "housebonde" to just follow her commands and obey her as and animal would and also shows how she is trying to make Janikin seem lower than her as religiously medieval people believed the order of beings went from God to men to women to animals; she is making him below her. Furthermore, she says "let me ba thy cheke" which is something done to children ~~that~~ so <sup>therefore</sup> highlights how Alison is stripping Janikin of his masculinity by patronising and manipulating him. Chaucer's use of



The fluency, detail and emerging evidence of evaluation in this response merited a Level 5 mark.



Keep the context (here the point is supported by a Biblical reference) closely tied to the text and to the argument.

## Question 6

The storyteller prompt gave candidates much scope to express their security in understanding plot, themes and (to varying extents) grasp of poetic stance. Better responses were those that sustained a focus on the Wife's methods of storytelling. Candidates made effective comments on Alisoun as a storyteller from the given extract and a well-chosen second passage and made good use of the Wife of Bath's manipulation of religious texts and doctrines, drawing parallels between her unreliability and views of the church and misogynist literature. For a range of middling responses towards either Chaucer task, however, there was something of a lacking in a fully developed literary approach in that even higher-bound responses often fell a little short of a firm grip of linguistic analyses presented throughout the tale. There were many that could and should have developed in more depth a deconstruction of poetic techniques, function and effects. Some candidates focused more on the narrative content and less on The Wife's narrative style and her character as presented by Chaucer, losing sight of the degree to which points about the Wife of Bath's character counted as points about her as a storyteller if directly related to the ways she manipulated the story. Contexts and their influences for the most part were well expressed and argued, with the strongest responses weaving such factors through the fabric of their discussion.

The second extract chosen needs to be of an appropriate length. One candidate chose only 16 lines: using the following ten lines would have provided valuable material and better enabled them to explore the Wife as a storyteller.

These opening pages of a secure Level 5 response demonstrate a sophisticated grasp of Chaucer's methods, with neatly interwoven contextual details, made relevant, but not overwhelming the argument.

The wife of Bath is presented as a dangerously convincing and irreverent storyteller who challenges the established authority. Chaucer depicts her as ~~unusually~~ knowledgeable for her time, but is doing so <sup>contemporarily</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~lead~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>contemplate</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~critic-~~ <sup>in lines 1-23 and also 163-186</sup> feminist stance against the education of women.

Firstly, Chaucer establishes the wife as ~~an~~ experienced storyteller which works in her favor as it lends credence to her Her - outlandish teachings. The very first lines of the prologue acts as a proof of the wife's credentials, 'Experience, though noon accordee ... To <sup>speke</sup> ~~speake~~ of us that is in marriage.' The wife begins by establishing a dichotomy between experience and authority, which immediately puts her in conflict with the Church which is symbolic ~~and~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>of</sup> the authority of the time.

The wife's experience comes from having wedded ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> five times 'at church done'. This again places her in conflict with the church which argued for widows to remain celibate. The ~~extensive~~ <sup>extensive</sup> opposition between the wife's ~~claims~~ <sup>extensive</sup> experience and the Church's authority over matters of marriage is set out from the start, therefore Chaucer establishes the wife as an experienced storyteller.

Furthermore, Chaucer presents the wife as irreverent and rebellious in her storytelling. He does this by depicting her as using the Church's own source of authority, the Bible, against them. She makes Biblical references to the story of the 'wedding, in the case of Galilee' and the 'sawnten' and then uses a rhetorical question to challenge the Church's interpretation of these events 'why was that the fifte man! was near hysbrude to the sawnten?' The use of a rhetorical question in conjunction with a rhyme between 'man' and 'sawnten' creates a satirical tone, suggesting that the wife is mocking the Church's interpretation. This would have been seen as irreverent at the time, as the Church was the sole authority on the Bible at the time and one of the three estates, printed



On the second page, the candidate explores the tone of the Wife's account, noting the use of rhetorical questions and rhyme for satiric effect.



For high level marks, close attention to AO2 is essential.

## Question 7

Carew's poem was successfully handled. Second choices included *The Sun Rising*, *The Good Morrow* and *The Flea*. Some responses showed limited appreciation of subtlety and less recognition of humour or irony even when depicting predatory male voices. The extract here shows how this can be approached.

This Level 5 response demonstrates a surefooted control of both context and content.

'The Good Morrow' by John Donne and 'To a Lady that desired I would love her' (hereafter 'To A Lady' by Thomas Carew) present love in contrasting ways. While in 'To a Lady' love is presented through the construct of courtly love, maintaining an icy distance between the lovers, in 'The Good Morrow' the courtly love is dismantled through the post-coital, erotic locus of the bed. Furthermore, the distance present in 'To a Lady' and the manipulative nature of the voice makes it questionable whether the speaker's love is genuine. In contrast, in 'The Good Morrow' the voice retreats to the world of his lover, affirming the genuine nature of their relationship.

In contrast to 'The Good Morrow' which does not describe the absent female listeners' physical qualities, 'To a Lady' is primarily a praise poem. Carew was the poet *Arcturæ* *Eligantia* in Charles I court and so would have been familiar of the courtly rituals of the

king's court. As such the poem prescribes to the traditional methods of courtly love. Carew presents the distance and elevation of the woman typical of Petrarchan love through in the first stanza. Through the use of the bridge of rhetorical questions it emphasizes the voice's vulnerability and ~~the~~ uncertainty. Furthermore, in the tragic syntactic list of 'will you torment, or scorn, or love me too?' it reflects the male voice's lack of power, giving the female lover agency and heightening her power. In doing so it makes the opening of the poem a traditional lament upholding the ideals created by Petrarch in his love poetry. This is heightened through the trial of 'wounds, flames and darts' which are traditional Renaissance images perceived to women to elevate their power. This serves to accentuate his praise of the female lover and presents the voice's love in keeping with the traditions of courtly love.

In contrast with 'To a Lady's' the Petrarchan ideals of love presented in 'To a Lady', in 'The Good Morrow' the constructs of courtly love are dismantled. Set in the erotic locus of the bed Donne presents of post-coital radiance in his exclamation of love that would have been shocking to an Elizabethan reader with their strict views on sex out of marriage. As it was vulgar to



The candidate is not afraid to interrogate the text, questioning the sincerity of the voice in Carew's poem. The second page includes some sophisticated textual analysis.



This response uses comparison and contrast to shape the argument. Although this is lightly used as a means to illustrate different approaches to love in the chosen poems, this is not a requirement in Section B and students should be advised not to make this a major element of their answers. Top level marks can be obtained without comparing poems.

## Question 8

This question, which attracted slightly more responses than the alternative, produced some strong answers. Most candidates connected context and technique effectively, for example in *The Apparition* appreciating subtlety and parody, picking up textual details such as that 'quicksilver' possibly referred to the mercury cure for syphilis.

This is the assured and sophisticated conclusion to an answer that fully deserved the top mark.

Overall, both ~~sets~~ of Donne's poems 'The Good Morrow' and 'Elegy' look at discovery through an alarmingly honest lens as Donne had been inspired by Philip Sidney's 'Apology for Poetry' published when he was young calling for a greater honesty in poetry rather than the lyrical, floral and pastoral rendering of the ~~the~~ traditional Elizabethan love sonnets. In this way Donne's mockery of a traditional 'Elegy' of mourning where he alternatively mourns the female's clothes remaining on in a humorous manner. Donne decides to use the realm and semantic field of discovery as a seduction technique. While

it entirely, appears that the absent female may have some power with her sexual veto, the ultimate discovery of the man's nakedness and the final word of the poem emphatically ~~reaffirms~~ being "man" as an emblem of the male plot of arrogant seduction and a projection of his certainty and success is implied. However, contrastingly in ~~the~~ 'The Good Morrow' the poetic voice still uses Donne's typical male bravado, but instead adds a certain level of vulnerability to the man. The discovery of the conditional 'it' in the ~~second to~~ penultimate line of the poem projects, by contrast to 'Elegy' ~~his~~ his uncertainty and doubts that his woman's love for him will last. Therefore, although his seduction has clearly been successful as the poem is post-coital, the man may confidently reject the outside world of discoveries, ~~and~~ exploration and societal change but he does so with an inherent doubt conveyed by his line "If our two loves be one!"



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The argument is continuing to develop right up to the final paragraph, with integrated and relevant use of the literary context as well as close reading of the poetry.



Aim to make each paragraph an integral part of the answer. Introductions and conclusions are far more effective when they eschew generalities and clearly establish the direction the response will take. If necessary, leave space on the first page so that you can write the introduction once you have fully developed the argument of the answer.

## Question 9

There were real opportunities for candidates to interrogate the ways in which Donne combines sacred and secular in both of these questions, though often these were missed. As with the metaphysical poets, context was often limited to biographical details with some misunderstanding of the time period in which Donne was writing, suggesting a greater understanding of literary and socio-historical context would be useful.

This extract from the middle of a response shows a candidate exploring their second poem with a secure grasp of the religious context, tied closely to the text.

Although Donne does not directly address God in Holy sonnet 11, he does use Biblical teachings to spur forth his argument. He <sup>claims</sup> ~~states~~ that he "crucif[ies] him daily" in which Donne is seen to invert 1 cor. 15:31 in which Apostle Paul <sup>states</sup> ~~states~~ that he dies every day for his sins, whereas here Donne places Jesus on the cross "daily." This conveys how not only that Jesus died for our sin, but how Donne seeks punishment and feels the need to be reprimanded for his sins. As such God's pardon is seen to be far greater than any "kings pardon" as it was "God's "strange love" that made his Son have a human form and physicality so that he was able to suffer pain and bear "our punishment." As such Donne argues that it is somewhat cruel and unfair that Jesus, "who could do no inequity" and was meek, mild and vulnerable died, yet Donne, who argues his own sin is far greater than the "Jews impiety" is to live on without punishment



Better answers on Donne and his Metaphysical colleagues demonstrated a clear understanding of the complexities and fluidities of the religious context, which this candidate makes good use of here. This response was awarded Level 5.



Whilst other sources can be useful, make the details of the poetry itself be the main focus when exploring context. That way AO2 should also be addressed.

## Question 10

This question was the more popular of the two. The argument of *Love's Alchemy* had been generally well understood. There was a tendency, however, for mid-range responses to translate Donne's language rather than to explore devices and analyse effect. Many developed ideas about science, alchemy and a world that was opening up. The supposed difficulty of Donne actually seemed to inspire responses of higher quality. There was pleasing variety in the poems used to answer the question with approaches ranging from assessing spiritual as opposed to earthly love (*The Flea*); praise of women alongside accusations of misogyny (*Elegy: To His Mistress Going To Bed*), alongside *The Sun Rising* and *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning* as the most popular.

Stronger responses looked further than Donne's biography for contextual material. Higher responses showed a clear grasp of the ambiguous nature of love or Donne's ambivalence toward contemporary attitudes to it. There were tendencies to comment rather broadly on Donne's attitude to love at the expense of very close textual analysis. Some, however, missed what one critic described as 'the fatigue, the cynicism, the flippancy and the bitterness of the disappointed seeker after 'the One and True' in the named poem.

This response shows a clear grasp of the named poem, developing a secure argument with integrated textual support. This includes both the scientific and literary background.

Donne presents a largely deeply negative view of love in his poem 'Love's Alchemy'. He argues that love cannot be perfect, and no matter how hard any body tries they will not be able to attain this perfect love that so many other poets of the time tended to write about. However, in 'The Sun's Rising' Donne does actually present his idea of a perfect love that, he believes, is superior to others and therefore should be regarded specially by even concepts as important as time itself.

The title 'Love's Alchemy' is an allusion to the Elizabethan idea of science, where it was believed that you could take a lesser element and make it priceless. Therefore, perhaps here Donne is misleading his reader by making us believe that perhaps instead he would be writing about a perfect form of

a quintessence, if you will.

love? However, instead he argues that 'O' is impotent all', ~~belittling~~ belittling the practice of alchemy because 'no chemic yet th' elixir get? Donne's melodramatic use of 'O' suggests his extreme frustration towards his notion of ~~perhaps~~ perfect love.

Showing this sense that it cannot be found. Donne also explores the sexual side of love, something he could afford to do more of since his poems were never intended to be published and instead only read (in his case perhaps due to its fainty and misogynistic nature) to groups of youngmen like himself. This sexual aspect is explored in the first line: 'Some have that have deeper digged Love's mine'. Donne's repeated use of the pleasurable 'd' sound creates an effect of sexual aggression, and perhaps links back to his idea that Donne is frustrated with love as he grows aggressive towards it. Furthermore, Donne's use of 'love's mine' is certainly an innuendo for female genitalia, and the fact that the woman is merely referred to by her ability to be a sexual plaything for Donne shows how perhaps Donne blames women for his imperfect love that he resents, and is antagonised largely by sexual engagement.



The response takes a little while to address the text, but shows a good understanding of the contextual references as well as an evaluation of Donne's point of view. The response overall achieved a lower Level 5 mark.



Your approach and poem choices need to be clearly linked to the key words of the question, as they are here. Try to do this through succinct use of quotation from the start.

## Question 11

Romanticism, represented by this anthology and the Keats selection, was by far the most popular poetry in Section B, and this was the most popular question. There were many interesting answers. Most chose a second poem wisely, though some did not, apparently led by what they felt they knew and understood well rather than the requirements of the question. Byron's *Lines Inscribed upon a Cup Formed from a Skull* and Emily Bronte's *R Alcona to J Brenzaida* were popular choices of pairing. Another fairly popular poem was *On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year*, but candidates did not always select appropriate parts of this poem for discussion, and some did not show understanding of the literal meaning. *Ode to a Nightingale* worked well and some good work was seen on *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, though candidates were wise to concentrate on a section such as Death-in-Life rather than attempting to cover the whole poem.

The personal context of Shelley at the time of composition was used by most candidates to support their argument, though there was some over-emphasis on scandal with little connection to the poems and, in a few cases, surprising confusion with Keats. Stronger responses explored relevant exploration of the Gothic, second-generation Romanticism and belief and unbelief. Lower level responses tended to simply identify the bleak landscape (seen as representing Shelley's guilt), while better answers often further developed this through discussion of the power of nature over the body and successfully linked this to Romantic ideas about nature and the sublime. The most successful responses here focused first on the poems themselves, the language and imagery, metre and rhymes, drawing out meanings through Romantic preoccupations such as nature, the Divine, emotion over reason, values of the individual.

Regardless of pairing, the Industrial Revolution came up often as an aspect of context, but it was difficult for candidates to use their knowledge of this to illuminate their discussion of death. Some managed it, by talking about deaths that were caused by diseases in the cities, but for others it was bolted on context that was not helpful. A substantial number of candidates saw Shelley's depiction of death as hopeful due to his Pantheism, but did not acknowledge this as an alternative reading of the poem rather than a statement of fact .

One or two candidates referred to a poem by Emily Bronte named as *Last Lines* but not the poem on page 348 in the set text. That was a different work more frequently known by its first line, *No coward soul is mine*, that can be sometimes found online with the title 'Last Lines'. It is important that students and teachers use the prescribed text and specified poems to avoid any problems.

This secure Level 5 response begins confidently with an overview of each poem which places them in the Romantic tradition.

In Percy Shelley's "The Cold Form Slept Below", death is idealised in the form of the almost angelic figure of the dead Ophelia like woman who is at the centre of the poem. However, the comic description that contrasts this adds an opposing tone of bitterness and pitying that the speaker mourns. For Emily Brontë in "R. Alcorn to J. Brontë" death is presented as similarly tragic, yet provides the speaker strength to find reward and fertilisation in their loss. Unlike in much Romantic poetry such as that of Wordsworth and Byron, death, although perceived as a reunifying of soul and nature, is not perceived as a cleansing experience. Perhaps this contrast to Romantic beliefs concerning the "spiritual" ~~state~~ elevation" (Wordsworth) that death is a vehicle for <sup>faithful</sup> is due to the poets own personal experiences with death which cause them to noticeably deviate from stylistic and periodic tradition.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The opening paragraph shows a clear grasp of key features of each poem, already linking them to their literary contexts, including, interestingly, the striking reference to Ophelia.



Considering the relationship of the chosen poems to literary tradition such as Romantic views on death and the life of the spirit, is often more profitable than simpler links to biography or social history. These aspects give an avenue to explore literary features in the poems which address both AO2 and AO3 in an integrated way.

## Question 12

The length of Wordsworth's poem was perhaps the reason fewer candidates chose this question. It did, however, offer rich opportunities to explore key aspects of Romanticism and thereby evaluate the context in an integrated and critical way. Students and teachers need to be prepared to handle the longer poems in several of the texts on this paper, able to convey an overview of the works while selecting sections most pertinent to the question which also allow scope for close textual analysis (AO1 and AO2).

Students who chose this question tended to want to say a lot about Romanticism, although without distinguishing between how this related to Wordsworth and other writers, particularly Blake. Some interesting points of contrast were drawn with *Innocence: Holy Thursday*.

Stronger candidates analysed the presentation of childhood and its innocence and purity in detail. They could also link to a religious context and explore the Romantic approach to childhood as a superior state to adulthood. This question did, however, also produce some rather limited responses from candidates less confident in their knowledge of the poems.

This extract near the beginning of a Level 5 response indicates a developing argument clearly based on an understanding of Wordsworth's ideas, tied to pastoral features in the named poem.

As with Wordsworth's other poems, like *Tintern Abbey* for example, there is a heavy presence of pastoral images throughout the poem particularly within the first phase, such as 'meadows' and 'the extension of these images through the use of the sublime in phrases such as 'valley far and wide'. The use of these romantic themes suggest Wordsworth's affinity with nature in childhood, which has now passed. This is shown by 'there was a time' where the 'countryside' is 'appreciated in celestial light' however, by the end of the first stanza 'The things which I have seen / now can see no more' suggest an elegiac quality to the loss of childhood.



The candidate has an understanding of Wordsworth's attitudes to nature and how this relates to the pastoral tradition. This is used to good effect to begin an exploration of the presentation of childhood.



Knowledge of literary traditions such as the Gothic and pastoral can be of great value in illuminating key aspects of a poem, but should, as here, be clearly related to the question focus and not simply for their own sake.

## Question 13

This was the second most popular question in Section B, far outstripping the second Keats option. There was a wide range of second poems, frequently *Ode on Melancholy*, but also *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, *O Solitude!* (the most popular pairing, although many responses were not discriminating), *To Sleep*, *Ode to Psyche* and *On First looking Into Chapman's Homer*.

Form and structure was often under explored. Candidates might identify the form (ballad, sonnet or ode) but not really offer any comment on how that helped to shape the meaning and impact of the poem. There were some, however, very sophisticated responses which got to grips with the poems and the poetics such as Keats' concept of 'negative capability'. A key problem was articulating the central metaphor that Keats explores through the nightingale's song. Rarely was this clear in answers; where it was the candidate usually went on to the higher scores, whilst weaker answers seemed to get muddled and lean heavily on personal context. Discussion of context sometimes drowned out the texts themselves; several candidates assumed, through superficial readings, that Keats was a drunkard or drug addict.

To illustrate effective use of a number of aspects of Romantic context and Keats' own poetic philosophy, this is the opening of an accomplished response awarded full marks.

In the poems 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'Ode on Indolence', Keats portrays escapism as a means to ~~to~~ renounce the logic and reason of the enlightenment era ~~to~~ and in turn celebrate the ambiguities of life. Keats alludes to a sense of ~~in~~ ambiguity through his use of shadowy diction and the sense of uncertainty shown within the repetition of 'I cannot'. This wants to highlight his concern with the power of the imagination and wish to transcend, or escape, life through poetry.

Within both poems, Keats makes use of vague and ~~the~~ <sup>shadowy</sup> imagery as a means to highlight ~~to~~ the power of the imagination. In 'Ode to a Nightingale', ~~the~~ Stanza V ~~more~~ focuses on the senses. The depiction of 'embalmed darkness' and 'soft incense' gives a synaesthesia in which

all senses become blurred into one, more overarching, sensation. The loss of sight allows ~~to~~ the speaker, as well as the reader, to become more engaged in their senses and thus make use of their imagination. Similarly, Keats' choice to avoid ~~explicit~~ <sup>overly-vivid</sup> imagery in 'Ode on a Lullaby', and instead use shadowy images such as "muffled", "deep-disguised" and "remembered my eyes", leaves the reader with no choice but to place their <sup>own</sup> ~~own~~, more personal interpretation upon the poem. Keats' reluctance to use ~~is~~ language in a more vivid manner, in which the meaning is clear, could correspond with his rejection of the rationalism of the enlightenment era. As he wrote to his siblings in 1817 - "O for a life of sensations rather than of thought!" through his use of ~~more~~ vague imagery, thus open to the imagination, Keats portrays poetry's power to evoke sensation. He allows his readers to escape within the poems and view them as they please <sup>3\*</sup>. This sense of celebratory uncertainty is also shown within 'Ode to Nightingale' in the last line, 'Do I wake or sleep?' The way in which Keats ends the poem like this alludes to a sense of acceptance, he feels fulfilled despite the ~~most~~ ambiguity of sensation. Keats' use of negative capability in the line 'casual death' also further his acceptance of contradiction and thus rejection of logic and reason. Keats said of negative capability in a letter <sup>to Tom and George</sup> of 1817, "when man is capable of being in



Compared to drinking 'hemlock', a poisonous plant, immediately using this simile to suggest ideas about suicide and extreme attempts to 'escape suffering'. ~~Keats then~~ The second stanza moves <sup>swiftly</sup> ~~immediately~~ on to discuss 'draughts of vintage' (alcohol), now suggesting that this could be another way one might escape heartache. Keats spends a whole stanza discussing wine, at length, employing pleasurable sounds 'bubbles... people stamed' to as if to create the sound of corks popping. This is the cliché of drowning one's sorrows is however ~~given as dark~~ tried to evoke thoughts, as the final lines of this ~~stave~~ stanza mention 'leaving the world unseen.'



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The details are well chosen and there is an alertness to tone ('dark thoughts'), but at this point there has been no attempt to relate this to a wider context apart from the general link to nature and escapism in the introduction. The answer nevertheless developed a successful argument, securely in Level 4.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Try to keep both AO2 and AO3 in mind together in Section B - it should help you develop a controlled and discriminating argument.

## Question 14

Candidates knew a lot about Keats, and showed understanding of the scenario being presented in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. A number of candidates paired the Ode with poems which made it difficult to explore the presentation of the past in detail, such as *O Solitude!*. Candidates clearly mentioned 'the past' in topic sentences and at other points of transition during the response, but this sometimes felt like lip service was being paid to the task leaving the actual points made and quotations of limited relevance to the question. Better answers explored more sophisticated aspects, such as the tension between the perfection described in the scenes on the urn and Keats' comment: 'Cold pastoral!'

Discussion of context sometimes dominated over focus on the text, with some very general references such as that to 'a time of the Peterloo Massacre and increasing tension within Europe after the Napoleonic wars'.

This short extract from another top level response illustrates a secure grasp of the complexities of Keats' description of the urn.

complexities greatly. The second reason for its popularity would be the fact that he ~~challenges~~ turns what would be a rather mundane topic of a greek pot into a celebration of love, sex and human mortality.

Keats ~~also~~ describes his frustration and jealousy of the figures painted on the urn as they remain 'eternally young' and immortal, whilst ~~he~~ also feeling pity for them ~~for~~ as they will never be able to feel the same sensations and experiences as a real person.



The extract establishes near the start a significant aspect of the named poem, Keats' ambiguity about its perfection, and how that relates to the topic of the past.



Always spend a little time before you write consider the key aspects of the poems that you want to convey in relation to the question. That will enable you to demonstrate an overview and give direction to your response.

## Question 15

A relatively small number of candidates chose the Victorian anthology. For this question, there was a range of second poems, including passages from *In Memoriam*. Some interesting responses made good use of contextual knowledge, such as Charlotte Brontë's place as a woman in Victorian society contrasted to the freedom from conventions brought by night-time.

Weaker candidates gave surface readings of the named poem and made very general comments about the night. Stronger responses looked at what the night might represent metaphorically, for example death. Contextually, some candidates relied on biographical information or generalised pronouncements about Victorian society, its norms and its attitudes. Not all Victorians thought and acted the same, and it would be good for candidates to recognise this, and also to be aware of the relevance of specific details they cite. One candidate referred to the death of Prince Albert in relation to Charlotte Brontë; she was dead before this occurred. Others were better able to explore features of Victorian poetry and the religious context.

Taken from the middle of a borderline Level 3/Level 4 response, this extract demonstrates some proficiency in exploring Brontë's craft.

Brontë's portrayal of night is shown as eerie and sinister.

Brontë was heavily influenced by religious imagery as she was brought up in a religious household, as her father was a priest. This is shown within her ~~poem~~ poem as 'a silent guest' is portrayed creating a ~~feeling~~ supernatural being.

The portrayal of a supernatural being creates a ~~to~~ eerie tone, conveying night as haunted. The use of sibilance 'Shadow shed o'er stair' creates a 's' sound ~~of~~ that ~~suggests~~ creates a hushed effect emphasising the silence of the night and an sinister effect of the movement of the ~~ghost's~~ 'silent guest'.



The context allusion here is brief and general; though relevant it could have been more fully developed. Elsewhere, there has been more specific contextual detail. The comments on the poem demonstrate alertness to tone and an ability to explore how meaning are shaped. For a higher mark, this would have been more sustained and, perhaps, tied more directly to the context.



To gain credit in AO3, contextual references need to be at least relevant and, for higher levels, detailed as well.

## **Question 16**

There were relatively few responses to this question; the best were able to relate the extract to the whole text of *Maud* and refer to Tennyson's relationship to Hallam to illustrate the theme of memories. There was, however, little awareness of evolving attitudes to the afterlife in the Victorian period.

## Question 17

The Christina Rossetti selection was a popular text again this year. Examiners reported that most responses were either really strong, engaging with the poems in detail, or quite weak, general answers, often drawing heavily on biographical material. Only rarely did candidates consider any variation or ambiguity in the poet's ideas and beliefs.

For this question, few responses showed a confident analysis of form and structure in *Goblin Market* or a willingness to engage in alternative readings of the poem. Whilst many looked closely at the language in the first part of the poem, from Laura's temptation onwards it was generally addressed in paraphrase, leading to narrative elements in the response. There was a sense that some candidates had failed to read (or hear) the poem as a whole.

There were interesting responses to how Rossetti tells stories. Many candidates chose to explore the moral message of the stories in the chosen poems (*Maude Clare* and *An Apple Gathering* were popular choices) and linked this well to the social context. More could have been made on the ways in which stories are told rather than their message – this would have allowed a deeper engagement at AO2 when considering the craft of the writer. Higher level responses more effectively considered aspects such as narrative arc, allusion and other literary techniques in order to comment on Rossetti's story telling. Weaker candidates showed a general understanding of *Goblin Market* and lapsed into re-telling the story of the poem rather than analysing how Rossetti tells it.

Here the candidate is exploring in detail the ways Rossetti has written the goblin men's enticement of the sisters.

Furthermore, in 'Goblin Market', Rossetti presents the story of temptation of the goblin men. Rossetti presents the goblin men ~~as~~ almost as being a charm to the women, their repetitive speech "Come buy... come buy" and the iambic structure <sup>and rhyming couplets</sup> of "Figs to fill your mouth, Citrons from the South" has a mesmerising effect, seducing Lizette and Laura. Rossetti presents the temptation ~~of~~ the girls feel throughout, this could perhaps be referencing the 'Garden of Eden' and the temptation the Eve felt from by the serpent. This concept is

further enforced through the excessive listing of fruits "Apples and quinces, Lemons and oranges... Melons and cherries", therefore connecting the concept of excess. The temptation by all the fruit becomes mysterious when it is ~~suggested~~ said that they are "All ripe together", therefore connecting some a magical and charming effect, further enticing the girls. Although Rossetti presents ~~them~~ Laura and Lizzie as different characters, she is trying to convey the concept of different <sup>and emotions</sup> parts being inside everyone, ~~these~~ shown through the similarities of their names. This ~~idea~~ ~~than~~ ~~some~~ draws on the Freudian



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This extract from a Level 5 response shows close attention to the poet's craft. There is awareness of the religious context.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Hearing the poems read aloud - ideally, by doing so yourself - should give you a clearer idea of the poet's use of metre, rhyme and rhythm. This should better equip you to reflect on the impact of these aspects.

## Question 18

Candidates showed a reasonable understanding of what faith meant to Christina Rossetti, although often without much precise context and how this was demonstrated in *A Christmas Carol*. *Uphill* was one of the more popular (and successful) choices of second poem.

Better responses tended to focus tightly on the question given its direct relevance to named poem. Broader religious ideas and images were discussed effectively, and higher-level responses incorporated some excellent comment on the symbolic significance of setting at the beginning and the contrast with the end of the poem. Some contextual points were made well (faith as a struggle was an effective approach) but weaker responses tended to rely on tenuous biographical points. These answers often showed a superficial understanding of Rossetti's devotion and were not always sure whether to label her Catholic or Protestant – or even both. Some ventured into consideration of the Tractarian (or Oxford) Movement, but on the whole there was not a deep level of understanding shown. Candidates are not expected to have a deep knowledge of church history, but some grasp of specific aspects of Rossetti's beliefs would enable them to understand her work more fully.

Taken from a Level 3 response, this shows some knowledge of how Rossetti shapes meaning and how this relates to her exploration of faith.

Christina Rossetti presents faith in both 'A Christmas Carol' and 'Up-hill'. She shows her devotion to God through both and highlights heaven as a very significant place. Her use of the title, 'A Christmas Carol' suggests her desire for her poem to be sung and also emphasises the importance of Christmas day as Jesus' birthday. Whereas, 'Up-hill' suggests a struggle to reach heaven but implies that the journey is worth it. It suggests that maintaining faith is not always easy as we see in Rossetti's own life through her religious crisis and also her ~~switch~~<sup>temporary</sup> shift from love of God to secular love, as shown through her recent failed engagement to James Collinson in 1850.

Struggle is presented in 'Up-hill' in the first line, "Does the road wind ~~up~~ up-hill all the way?" which uses 'the road' as a metaphor for the journey to

heaven but also questions whether faith is worth the struggle from the use of a question as the first line. The comfort of faith is displayed in the phrase, "A roof for when the slow dark hours begin" as we see the idea of God caring for the people and providing shelter for the journey to full religious devotion. Shelter is shown in 'A Christmas Carol' through the reference to a "stable place sufficed". This shows the idea of faith in God being more important than materialistic value of things, which mocks ~~typical~~ conventional Victorian attitudes.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate is aware of the presentation of faith as a struggle and makes a relevant link to the poet's biography in support. The comments are clear but lack detail and development.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

The candidate moves between the two poems in this paragraph. For Section B, this kind of integrated approach is less desirable and, as here, can prevent more detailed exploration.

## Question 19

As last year, entries for twentieth-century poetry were comparative low, with the Modernist anthology and Larkin the more popular options.

For these texts, some candidates struggled to address the context, which often relied on brief general statements. This is perhaps, at least in part, because the disparate factors bearing on the poetry of the last hundred or so years can appear overwhelming. Careful preparation can help bring coherence to this context. Better responses for this anthology had an understanding of some of the key elements of Modernism as well as the broader historical context.

This paragraph is taken from a strong Level 5 response. The candidate (whose second poem was Lawrence's *Snake*) is developing a sophisticated account of the shifting tones in Eliot's poem, emphasising that this is a Modernist feature.

The inconsistent use of the second and third person in the following stanzas of Eliot's poem reveal the true sense of confusion and pessimism characteristic of Modernist poetry. Certainly the lexis shifts accordingly to be more negative in the first person - 'leave' 'grieve' 'torn' 'bruised' - as the voice is freed from constraints of perspective and the forced objectivity of the third person. Writings of the first person are especially effective as modernist techniques as it allows for the revelation of the 'invisible world' which

Freud wrote of (desire) as indicated by the emotional exclamatory 'And I wonder how they should have been together!'. The effect of this is limited however by Eliot's decision not to write a stream of consciousness but a poem with restricting shifts in perspective. As such, the inner turmoil this effect may be seen to more accurately indicate is the confused, fractured sense of self which was both prolific of the Modernist literary era but also a common universal response to heartbreak - as 'She turned away', the voice of the poet became confused and - the unconventional structure of the poem further reinforces this, there is no order or continuity after love, or in life in general in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Eliot's formatic and structural methods are reflective of this.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

As with other responses at this level, there is close textual detail with explanation of how Eliot creates shifting points of view and moods. Contextual material, such as the reference to Freud, is brief but very much to the point.



Neatly embedded quotation of the kind exemplified here helps track the detailed working of the poet's craft. But you should not hesitate to combine this with extracts stretching over two or more lines where these would enable you to demonstrate your understanding of structural and other aspects.

## Question 20

This was the more popular choice on this text, although a significant number of candidates struggled to write clearly on Moore's poem and producing better material on their own choice. Many used Millay's *Time does not bring relief*; Auden's *Stop all Clocks* was another successful option. Answers usually contained some straightforward references to what characterises Modernism but were often vague on the contexts that related to it.

Stronger responses explored the reference to the caged bird and the questioning of time as a construct. There were many general explorations of structure and enjambment but some linked this nicely to the structures found in Modernist poetry as a whole. References to context could be very effective, such as a detailed analysis of Modernist ideals, but weaker candidates made very general comments on aspects such as war.

## Question 21

A popular choice to accompany *The Hollow Men* was *The Burial of the Dead*; this enabled more successful discussion than some of the others chosen. *Preludes*, for example, was not dealt with particularly effectively, with candidates fixating on a simple reading of the futility of the modern world and not developing this any further. In contrast, *The Burial of the Dead* tended to elicit more developed responses with plenty of analysis of Eliot's allusions to religious, classical and other literary texts.

This candidate is using *The Burial of the Dead* to develop the exploration of the futility of life in Eliot's poetry.

'The Burial of the Dead' explores how ~~the~~ renewal of life is cruel. A statement is made by ~~the~~ Eliot in the opening stanza as 'April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of dead land'. Spring is usually concerned with renewal of life and regeneration, however Eliot is presenting this month as cruel.

Shaping his opinions on the futility of life. His use of imagery presents memories as 'stirring' with desire as Spring brings an <sup>dark</sup> emotional ~~emotions~~. Oxymoron is employed as 'Winter kept us warm', it seems that in this culture ~~the~~ they prefer the cold months of winter. Winter brings ~~to~~ a barren landscape with no renewal, it is a month of hibernation. The Earth is covered 'in forgetful snow', this ~~is~~ is used by Eliot to show how the past is covered up as <sup>society</sup> ~~they~~ ~~the~~ tries to forget ~~its emotions~~. Eliot is most likely referencing the ~~the~~ societies reaction to post-war England. Life became dull and many were left damaged by the war causing a weakened culture. Therefore, Eliot is considering the futility of life that has been left.



Although lacking sophistication, this account pays careful attention to the details Eliot uses to convey futility and the barren nature of his world. Contradictions are noted and discussed. The post-war context is noted, though in a rather general way. By conscientious accumulation of detail, this response went on to merit a Level 4 mark.



Aim to tie any contextual references to details in the text; this response is more successful later when it comments on the 'black and white [post-war] world, portrayed as "shape without colour".'

## Question 22

This question attracted only a few answers, though these were often very well informed and made the most of their contextual knowledge.

In this extract, the candidate sets out a clear and detailed explanation of the Modernist project, supported by quotation. In many cases, context is best embedded alongside the exploration of the text, but in this case the nature of the task makes this kind of overview helpful.

T.S. Eliot, ~~in both~~ was a Modernist poet, modernism is an artistic movement that "Man sought as Ezra Pound says "Make it New!", through the rejection of traditional styles and forms of poetry. They needed to create a new form in order to express their new ideas on the fragmented, doomed modern world. However despite this rejection of tradition Eliot uses many references and borrows ideas and lines from other texts. In many of his poems he uses "Mythical method", a term he coined, to use references to classical texts to highlight the flaws of modern world, this can be seen in both poems. Eliot also includes <sup>in both poem</sup> many references that juxtapose or contrast his poem in order to emphasise his points and evoke certain emotions. There are a number of religious references in both poems, which express the idea of fragmentation and divided beliefs of the world. It is these <sup>examples</sup> ~~uses~~ of borrowing from other texts that this essay will analyse.

In "The Fire Sermon", "The Waste Land" third section, Eliot demonstrates the Mythical <sup>method</sup> ~~method~~ <sup>by using</sup> a number of <sup>paraphrasing</sup> ~~references~~ <sup>Philomela and the Tiresias</sup> ~~references~~. This poem uses the setting of London, an urban environment to ~~express~~ explain his views on

the Wasteland ~~that~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>barren</sup> the modern landscape, in which  
 he has lost touch with faith and meaning. He looks  
 particularly at the corruption of sexual relationships,  
 through the interaction between the "clerk" and a young  
 man. ~~The presence of "The Aswell as the highly erotic~~  
~~imagery of this~~ <sup>The highly erotic imagery of this</sup>  
 poem, such as the "Throbbing" taxi, which becomes almost  
 a phallic symbol, and the undressing of the clerk "striding,  
 supple, canisled" <sup>which</sup> is contrasted by the sterility of the act.  
 The Tiresias, is an ancient character from Greek mythology,  
 who is ~~born~~ physically blind but able to see the future  
 (this is a reference to an inability to communicate in the  
 modern world), ~~he~~ is both male and female "old man  
 with wrinkled female breasts", his ~~presence of this encounter~~  
~~he~~ ~~foresee~~ this encounter and ~~watches the unsatisfying~~  
~~sexual act~~. His presence, caught between two sexes and  
 genders underlines not only the complication of sexuality but <sup>fragmented</sup> ~~type~~  
 interactions and the ~~lack~~ <sup>loss</sup> of touch in the poem.



**ResultsPlus**  
 Examiner Comments

The second paragraph turns to analysis of details  
 in 'The Fire Sermon'. The remarks on 'the sterility  
 of the act' and the reference to Tiresias  
 demonstrate a sure grasp of Eliot's methods. The  
 response sustained this level of analysis to achieve  
 a Level 5 mark.



Consider carefully how you will treat contextual aspects of the question. In this case, after a paragraph providing an overview, the candidate supports the comments on the method with well-chosen detail.

## Question 23

This text attracted a relatively small entry. Responses were, however, mostly good, with nuanced responses to issues related to class and social change in the poems. There was effective discussion of the 'crown' in Macbeth's poem and its place on a dusty shelf.

This second paragraph of the response shows the candidate engaging in a detailed way with details from both the named poem and Holden's *Photograph of a Haymaker 1890*. These are neatly linked to the context of the Movement and the post-Second World War period. This was a secure Level 4 response.

Firstly, one important connection shared by both texts is the transformation of a physical object into a symbol of metaphor beyond their purpose. In 'The Mine is Helmet', this object is the helmet itself, and in Holden's poem it is the scythe. The helmet becomes an "abdicated king's crown", and the image of the narrator picking it up and using it as a symbol of royalty, of greatness creates a sense of character for the narrator's father as one much much higher than the occupation of someone that actually wears the helmet would be. Similarly, the myth in 'Photography of Haymaker, 1890' is the tool which is described as the tool which makes the grass "[die] before his blade." This transformation visualisation of the haymaker tool as a killing machine portrays the haymaker as a villain, as death personified, rather than his simple farming background. This vision of objects holding metaphorical properties is one that Movement poets in general were not a fan of, as they opposed the ~~poem~~ modernist poetry of the 1930's and 1940's, and were more focused on simpler,

# physical descriptions of events



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This section picks up the importance of the way Macbeth makes the miner's helmet a 'crown' for his father. The comments on Holden's use of the scythe is slightly less successful - it might have been better not to attempt to link the poems so closely.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

When planning your response to a poem, including the unseen in Section A, try to identify at least one key image, phrase or sentence that takes you to the heart of the poem.

## Question 24

*Nothing to be Said* was often accompanied by with another Larkin poem such as *Toads*, though other poems were also used with success.

Some candidates struggled to define 'The Movement'. As this is a fairly disparate group of poets, it might be more helpful to let the context of the question and the poems lead the context for this text. Some students thought, rather improbably, that 'The Movement' was a reaction to Romanticism, though more usefully Hardy's influence was mentioned.

This paragraph from near the beginning of the response sets both poems chosen within the historical context but also uses details from the texts to explore what the candidate considers as the typical tone of Movement poetry.

Both Larkin and Jenny Joseph reflect contemporary life as increasingly anxious. Whilst Larkin's poem is about regeneration within life, Joseph's poem 'warming' is about the reflection of ageing and its effects within society today. Larkin's use of enjambement within the stanza 1 after the word 'dying,' immediately leaves the reader at unease when they start to read the poem. The emphasis of the word 'dying' after the enjambement

conveys the importance of his message which is the <sup>reflection of</sup> ~~the anxiety of~~ contemporary life: within his time <sup>which was</sup> ~~is~~ eroding drastically. This idea is further developed through his use of mundane language, 'vague as weed' and 'mill-rains on dark mornings'. The simile as well as the dark imagery suggests how Larkin's contemporary life is becoming a blur ~~as well as~~ <sup>through</sup> society's use of pollution <sup>and our livelihoods</sup> damaging the effects of nature. Contextually, Larkin was famously known for his clear, accessible mundane language to show his emotions coherently. As a movement writer he explored the anxieties of post world war 2, as a result, most of his poems have a sense of unease. This idea can be seen ~~in~~ <sup>through</sup> the metaphor 'measuring love and money' - which suggests the corrupt nature of Britain's actions as well as society. The connotations and juxtaposition of 'love' and 'money' conveys Larkin's ~~anger~~ <sup>anxiousness</sup> within contemporary life as a way of emphasizing the importance of materialistic gains. As a result he may be questioning the morality of society <sup>as a result</sup> ~~as a result~~ <sup>ramification</sup> of world war two's impact, becoming more materialised.



The text is used effectively to show how, for example, Larkin's 'mundane language' reflects his anxieties about contemporary life. The answer went on to gain a lower Level 4 mark.



Higher Level responses explore how language and structure can create the tone of a poem; make it your aim to identify such features in the poems you explore.

## Question 25

*At Grass* was usually dealt with clearly, with a wide range of second poems chosen. Exploration of the way Larkin explored change in his poems, often by moving from the specific to the general, was less well covered.

These opening paragraphs convey an effective grasp of both poems and the beginning of a careful analysis of each.

Superficially, 'At Grass' appears to be a poem portraying the transition of a horse's life from the glory of racing in its youth, to an ambience of emptiness and melancholy in its retirement. A similar change can be discerned in the poem 'Wires', whereby Larkin delineates a transition from the aspiration and imagination of youth, to a depressing realisation of limitations and entrapment in adulthood. However, 'At Grass' could be interpreted to portray a different kind of change, which is suggested through military imagery and facilitates the discovery of even more interesting comparisons between the poems and, in particular, the theme of change.

'At Grass' comprises a significant structural contrast between the tempo and rhythm of the opening

and closing stanzas, in contrast with that of the second and third stanzas. The second and third stanzas are of a much quicker tempo and rhythm, due to the frequent utilisation of accumulative words like "and", causing the reader to read at a faster pace, in addition to the implementation of monosyllabic words and colons in the third stanza, which create staccato. ~~This~~ This contrast in tempo could represent the change between the dynamic life of the horse's past, which is primarily described in stanza three, and the slow-paced, ~~empty~~ empty life it now has, described in stanza one, for example; "the other seeming to look on". The structure of 'Wires' also symbolises a transition, but in this poem it is of childhood, ~~suggested~~ suggested by "young steers" to adulthood; "old cattle". The two stanzas are separated to create a feeling of disconnection perhaps, between ~~childhood~~ who we are as children and who we are as adults, which is supported by the fact that the "young steers are always seeking purer water", whilst the "old cattle know they must not stray". The structure therefore facilitates a transition between the imaginative, aspirational attitude of a child, and the acceptance of "electric fences" as an adult and the recognition that there is no "purer water". The regular structure of two four-line stanzas is also a result of the influence of the movement, who Lukin was often affiliated with, despite his refusal to categorise himself within

To escape the free nature of modernism,  
a group or movement. The movement of poetry often featured  
very regular, traditional composition of structure and  
stanza, which is evident in both 'Wires' and 'At Cross'.  
Larkin appears to have utilised this contemporary form of  
composition and structure to facilitate his portrayal of  
change in both poems; a change in age ~~and~~ and  
exposure to the world which is equally negative in both  
poems.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate claims, not unreasonably, that each poem has symbolic as well as literal application. The details are developed effectively in the second paragraph. As often, the writer seems instinctively to compare and link the poems; this is not a failing provided that it does not interfere with the main purpose of the response, which is to explore the question and context. Context is in fact less well treated here, though there are some general remarks on 'The Movement' at the end of this section. This is from a borderline Level 3/4 response.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Whilst context should not dominate your response, aim to incorporate it throughout your response where possible. In this case, more could perhaps have been made of Larkin's references to race-going and to the significance of the restriction of the cattle in 'Wires'.

## Question 26

Candidates often selected *Wedding-Wind* or *Maiden Name* to accompany the named poem; *Skin* was an imaginative choice. Candidates had much to say about Larkin's personal life, including identifying the 'young lady' of the title, but less about the Britain he lived in. This was perhaps inevitable given the nature of the question. Explorations of misogyny featured in both high and low scoring responses appreciation of moments of tenderness as well as irony were less common.

This is from a controlled and detailed response that just fails to achieve the highest level.

Throughout the Movement, ~~the~~ Philip Larkin was known for his idea of realism and ~~to~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ in both lines on a young lady's photograph and Maiden name Larkin evokes his ~~that~~ harsh ideas of women. Maiden name explores the aftermath of marriage and the idea that women lose their identity, whereas lines ~~on~~ on a young lady's photograph album explores the beauty of women and the value of a photograph.

Larkin uses both poems ~~to~~ in order to objectify women through language. The title of 'Maiden Name' immediately objectifies women as this highlights that women who Larkin is referring to has no identity, this is further drawn in the first line of the stanza as it states 'Marrying left your maiden name disused', the use of the

~~adjective~~ adjective 'disused' emphasises the idea that women no longer have ~~an~~ value once they are ~~married~~ married, additionally this ~~creates~~ links to the ideas which were shown in English tradition as women were seen as the inferior gender ~~as~~ ~~the~~; when married they were forced to be submissive ~~to~~ and submit to their husband. This is further shown throughout the poem as in the second stanza it states 'senseless, ~~weightless~~ weightless, strengthless' the use of repetition of 'less' evokes the idea that women are viewed as 'less' than in a marriage. Repetition is also seen ~~&~~ in the poem as the speaker describes the woman's 'young beauty' in the first stanza and in the third stanza the speaker explains 'how beautiful you were'. Repetition of the word 'beauty' evokes the idea that women were only appreciated for their beauty and had no other strengths apart from ~~the~~ their appearance. Similarly the idea of appearance is also seen in lines on a young girl's holiday photograph album' this is seen in the second stanza as the speaker states 'My averted eye hungers from pose to pose', the use of the adjective 'averted'



The opening of this response is clear and addresses the context directly, though in a fairly general manner. It is, however, a little assertive, a feature also of the subsequent discussion. The poems are explored closely, with appropriate detail, but some of the subtleties of Larkin's accounts are missing. 'How beautiful you were, and near, and young', for example, perhaps indicates more than just 'objectification'.



Try to discern and describe the subtler tones in the work of a poet like Larkin. Apparently, deceptively, straightforward his poems usually contain at least one significant shift, perhaps from the specific to the general - as in the final stanza of *Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album*.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- read both poems carefully before beginning to write (if a longer poem is chosen for Section B, this is likely to mean a review to select key passages for detailed study)
- write a plan that specifically relates to the question
- develop and deploy evaluative skills that are transferable to any poem
- avoid over-reliance on other people's commentaries – use the focus of the question
- avoid a formulaic approach to writing – let the question and the poems themselves determine the direction of your answer.

## Grade Boundaries

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

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>



