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# Examiners' Report

## June 2017

GCE English Literature 9ET0 03

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## Introduction

It is a pleasure to report that teachers and students rose to the challenges of the new specification and came to this poetry paper well-prepared. One senior examiner commented that the range of responses and variety of texts and interpretations made the paper 'a joy to mark'. Examiners saw the full range of achievement, including analysis with a degree of sophistication that merited full marks. It was also encouraging to find only a handful of really weak scripts; almost all candidates demonstrated an ability to respond to poetry with some degree of confidence and command of analytical skills.

High level marks were awarded to responses which integrated references to literary features within the body of an argument which was easy to follow and well-expressed. Less successful responses remained on the surface of the poems, often content to list rather than explore literary devices; the effect of poets' choice of structure was often ignored or misinterpreted. Generalised remarks on aspects such as enjambment and caesura make little impact without quotation (ideally set out in lines as in the original) and precise analysis.

There was some tendency to adopt a rather heavy-handed approach to form and structure, with straightforward assumptions that a rhyme scheme, verse form or enjambment 'shows' something about the subject of the poem. A more successful approach showed an understanding of the control imposed on a subject by a verse form; some candidates reached subtle insights by teasing out what was implied by individual variations in the form. This also tended to lead to a sharper awareness of the effects of poetry as an art form; a searching approach to the combination of, for example, rhyme, metre and onomatopoeic effects often turns almost naturally into evaluation.

There were a few rubric infringements where a handful of candidates attempted to use Genetics to address Question 2 or Effects to address Question 1, or in Section B wrote about a second poem which was not in the prescribed list. Unfortunately these limited the ability of the candidate to address the task set; students should be warned to study the question carefully and, if in doubt, remind themselves of the list of prescribed poems provided in the source booklet.

### Section A

Candidates are required to compare an unseen poem with a specified poem from the Forward anthology Poems of the Decade. The unseen poem proved accessible at all levels, with an engaging topic whilst containing nuance to test the most able and sensitive reader. Candidates were likely to be most successful if they took time to digest both poems as texts, each with something distinctive to say, before considering possible links to each other and to the topic stipulated in the question. Well-structured answers integrated comparison throughout the exploration of the poems rather than treating them separately. Weaker responses tended to plunge too soon into technical details at the expense of overview. Partial readings and misunderstandings produced some unconvincing and unhelpful speculation, such as that the baby had been abandoned or died, or that the line 'the baby steadies her head which is the head of a drunk's' meant that one or both parents were abusive alcoholics.

Candidates more sensitive to tone recognised that the importance of the opening and closing lines of Simmonds' poem (including the title) more than balanced the fact that the baby did not yet have a full identity or was now, after birth, a separate entity. The unwashed dishes, the list of chores and the half-hearted song were read as signs of the demands of caring for the baby but the non-verbal communication between baby and mother made it all worthwhile.

A key distinguishing factor was the ability to compare details within the poems; for example, the degree of control afforded to the child in “holds me with her blue eyes” and “My body is their marriage register” (Genetics) or the helplessness observed at both ends of life in “forever being shifted, rearranged” and “Whose fingers couldn’t clasp mine any more” (Effects). Having drawn such links, candidates were able to reach evaluative comparisons as to the power of these details in helping a reader to understand the bond or the varying emotive effects of the poetic responses to birth and death. Less successfully, some students adopted some kind of check-list approach; it is not useful to state that one poem contains enjambment but the other does not, without further explanation. A small minority of students seemed to feel that they should comment on context and spent time unnecessarily on biographies of the anthology poets. Whilst such background can help unlock references when first studying the poems, AO3 is not rewarded in Section A.

## Section B

Candidates’ answers were based in almost all cases on a good basic grasp of their chosen texts and an interesting range of approaches to relating texts to contexts. As in Section A, the best responses indicated an understanding of the poems as autonomous creations rather than pegs on which to hang lists of technical terms and, for this section, contextual information. Generalised historical or biographical information was of limited value; answers which related textual details to specific aspects of literary movements such as Romanticism were much more successful. Contextual information must, as the question requires, be ‘relevant’ and integrated to the argument. This applies whether candidates choose the period option or the individual poet: the best answers fully integrated understanding of the poems’ relationship to literary and other contexts in relation to the question.

The nature of relevant context will depend on a number of factors, and the mark scheme clearly states that examiners should ‘reward any valid... responses’. This will vary according to the period, text and question, but should provide ample scope for candidates to deploy their contextual knowledge. General statements on medieval attitudes to marriage (Question 6) will be less successful than detailed exploration of the ways the Wife of Bath deploys scholastic arguments against opponents. Similarly, a sensitive account of ways in which poets reveal Romantic attitudes to Nature and the Sublime would allow candidates to demonstrate higher-level, ‘discriminating’ or ‘sophisticated’, analysis of relevant context for Question 11. Examiners commented that context was sometimes less well covered for Twentieth Century texts, perhaps because the work appeared to be set in a world less obviously different to the present day. There are a number of ways this could be addressed, including exploring the features of Modernism or the Movement and picking up on clues such as the references to consumer goods such as a ‘new Daks suit’ and ‘my Worthington’ in the Peter Porter poem set for Question 24.

A few responses based their essay on comparison and some candidates failed to give sufficient attention to contexts. While links between the poems can help shape the essay, the focus needs to be on exploration of AO2 and relevant AO3. Other candidates quoted extensively from critics. Although this sometimes formed part of an evaluative consideration of the effect of a poem or of a poet’s work, in the majority of cases there was no opportunity to reward this within the mark scheme. There was often a tendency to insert a critic’s comment or contextual point into an answer regardless of its relevance – which is a key feature for candidates wishing to score in Level 3 or above.

Chaucer, Donne, the Romantic poets and Keats were the most popular choices, followed by Christina Rossetti. Twentieth Century poetry was a minority option, perhaps a reflection of

a decision to cover the specification's pre-Twentieth Century requirement through the texts for this paper.

In the commentary on Section B, it is not possible to include script extracts for every question – it is hoped that the samples provided will illustrate features that apply more widely. Centres are also directed to the 2017 standardisation scripts and other training materials made available by Edexcel for further examples of work for this paper.

## Question 1

This was the more popular of the two Section A questions. Successful answers explored the reciprocal nature of the relationships well and integrated a methodical stylistic analysis. Many also explored the ambiguity of the narrator in the unseen poem. Weaker answers tended to rely too much on narrative, making some relevant points but lacking cohesion, resulting in less clear essays. Genetics, the named anthology poem, was well prepared overall, although surprisingly many candidates seemed unfamiliar with the term villanelle and often missed the opportunity to explore ways in which the precisely patterned form of the poem related to its subject matter. Candidates often also ignored the significance of the final lines of Morrissey's poem, with its switch from 'I' to 'we', which would allow further understanding of the poet's subject and craft.

This extract is taken from a Level 2 answer, which was clearly expressed but of a mostly general nature.

The narrator in 'Kathryn Simmonds' poem also worries about the effects society will have on her still innocent baby. She talks about how, already, her daughter sits "in the television's orange glow". Simmonds could be making a comment <sup>about</sup> of the media's impact on young girls and the self esteems it can destroy. ~~The baby is already~~ The mother doesn't want her baby subjected to this scrutiny and unnatural "orange glow" but she cannot protect her. Similarly, Simmonds uses enjambement throughout the poem to express the feeling of the unstoppable momentum of life for the mother. She cannot ~~stop her baby~~ ~~prevent~~ the media corrupting her baby, just as she cannot stop her from aging to protect her from the world.

Likewise, Jenkins uses a lot of enjambement in "Effects" to convey the never ending cycle of care between parent and child. The son talks of "when my turn came to cook for her" as a chore, a laborious task for him and even mentions "all the weeks I didn't come". Again, he harbors deep regret for not reciprocating the care she gave him so willingly.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate, who had begun by establishing the basic outline of each poem, here moves into more speculative territory, asserting that the reference to television indicates concern about 'the media's impact on young girls' - ignoring Simmonds's statement that the baby 'does not know a television from a table lamp'. There is reference to 'a lot of enjambment' in each poem, but no examples are given and the comment on its effect is general. The opportunity to link the references to hands in each poem is missed.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Ensure that comments on aspects of the poet's craft are supported by specific examples that support the point made. Statements about meanings and implications should be securely supported from the text; avoid the temptation to rush into speculation.

These are the first two pages of a much more confident and successful response, awarded a secure Level 5 mark.

Chosen question number: **Question 1**  **Question 2**

Both poets examine relationships between parents and children in an emotive, beautiful way. In 'Genetics' the bond between parent and child is preserved within the narrator's body, shown in the beginning line: "My father's in my fingers, but my mother's in my palms." The title itself "Genetics" connotes ideas of love and inheritance as the parents pass on their characteristics through their DNA to their child.

The narrator of this poem suggests that her own body inherits and is representative of the marital bond shared between her parents since her "body is their marriage register", as if the words are engraved into her skin, preserving their love for each other, and the bond they have with their child. Within "When Six O'clock Comes...",

though it is not clear, I get the sense that the narrator is the motherly figure of the newborn child within the poem. There is an instant connection between the persona and the child, a certain bond, revealed in the starting line: "the baby who can not speak, speaks to me." This is a strange, ambiguous beginning line, where the reader may be confused by the oxymoronic expression - a baby who is incapable of talking, does. "Speaks to me" suggest the communication from the baby is directed ~~at~~ solely to the narrator - and no one else

suggesting a special bond between parent and child - though the reader wonders how this is even possible.

Both poets are able to explore the bond between parent and child by alluding to nursery rhymes - often sung by young children, taught by their parents. In 'Genetics', the fourth stanza is reminiscent of the childhood game children play with their hands, singing a rhyme and creating a chapel with their fingers:

" I shape a chapel where a steeple stands.

And when I turn it over,

my father's by my fingers, my mother's by my palms."

The innocent childhood imagery reinforces the bond between parent and child, ~~as~~ as well as the initial idea of the poem showing that though the narrator's parents' marital bond has broken down, their bond and love for their child remains within her. The hands represent the chapel where her mother and father married and within is the love she inherited from her parents. It's a beautiful, lovely image created where the bond seems eternal.

Similarly, within "When Six O'clock Comes..." children's rhyme is alluded to, but instead of an image of ~~a~~ prescience like in 'Genetics' there is a sense of a loss of childhood innocence and fun in the lines "and all at once we stop half-heartedly row, rowing / our boat and see each other clear". The ~~word~~ <sup>phrase</sup> "half-heartedly" suggests a lack of enthusiasm and conviction. As the narrator



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### Examiner Comments

This is a critical response that conveys a secure overview before moving to analyse well-chosen detail. Comparison is integrated without being mechanistic or formulaic. The candidate picks up on the 'strange, ambiguous opening' of the unseen and evaluates its effect. Natural links between the poems are made through their uses of nursery rhyme.



## ResultsPlus

### Examiner Tip

Notice how the longer quotation on page 2 is set out in lines – this makes it clearer and helps emphasise aspects of poetic form.  
Don't neglect the titles of poems: the candidate uses this as part of the overview.

## Question 2

These poems made an interesting contrast but also had a number of stimulating similarities and differences for candidates to explore. Most brought out the contrast between the remorse and guilt in *Effects* compared to the joy in the unseen. The length of Jenkins' poem required candidates to make discriminating choices in their exploration, which some found challenging. At the higher end of the range, there were some subtle links made across the poems when comparing the narrative perspectives and attitudes to the subject, with a number of candidates exploring the ambiguities identified. Candidates made significant reference to syntax in Jenkin's long block of text with only two sentences in comparison to the similar structure in Simmonds' poem. Less often and only apparent in higher levels were responses to irony and paradox ('the baby who cannot speak, speaks to me') and to the closing image of the mother's small bag of effects in *Effects*. Stronger answers commented on features in *Effects* like the distance between the rhyming lines to suggest the distance between the narrator and his mother and discussed the cyclical structure and the choice of verbs used to describe the mother.

This is the opening of a response which through perseverance and detail moved just into Level 4.

Chosen question number: **Question 1**  **Question 2**

In both the poems 'When Six O'clock comes and Another day has passed' by Kathryn Simmonds, and 'Effects' by Alan Jenkins, there is a ~~an~~ melancholic atmosphere created through the presentation of the ideas of death and birth, and the ill feelings that accompany both. In ~~the~~ Simmonds poem, she presents birth as something that becomes <sup>monotonous</sup> ~~not~~ ~~monotonous~~ and numbing. This can be seen hinted initially in the title with the use of the word ~~has~~ 'Another', giving implications ~~that~~ of a day that is almost on repeat, and there seems to be a lack of joy in this idea, the 'Another' almost tacked on wearily as if it is exhausting to pass a day.

This can be seen again later in the poem when Simmonds begins to describe what duties ~~the~~ ~~one~~ ~~must~~ ~~do~~ when caring for a baby, as she says "Whose hands must be unfed, and wiped with cotton ~~or~~ wool, whose ~~scalp~~ scalp must be combed at cradle cap" - she repeats 'must' in both lines, giving ~~the~~ the connotations of endurance, and of exhaustion. She does not view these as exciting activities, but rather chores that must be performed - there is no overwhelming sense of love, but rather the emotion present in ~~my~~ response to the birth is one ~~of~~ that seems akin to ~~my~~ ~~post-partum~~ post-partum depression.

~~The~~ This can also be inferred from the imagery she creates about caring for a newborn, most notably in the lines selected the description of "whose scalp must be combed at cradle cap" - Simmonds is dwelling on this very negative description of babies, providing this imagery of a skin condition that must be taken care of, as if depicting how taxing caring for infants can be.

This same monotonous, repetition of daily activities can also be seen in 'Effects', when Jenkins ~~is~~ reminisces on his ~~as~~ mother life, stating

"Not in all the years that sat together watching  
Soaps and game shows I disdained" – this  
repetitive lifestyle becomes taxing, however it is ironic  
to note that it becomes ~~to~~ as such to both  
child and parent. Both ~~poem~~ poems present this  
same idea of behaviour or repeat, however  
Simmonds depicts it through a baby, through birth.



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### Examiner Comments

The opening shows a clear structure and good grasp of some key features of each poem. Comments are based securely on details, such as the use of 'another' in the opening of Simmonds' poem. The inference that this signifies a 'lack of joy' is less convincing. The essay does however proceed to explore links to the repetitive nature of the narrator's visits to the mother in *Effects*, making some effective points. Later comments reveal a sensitivity to tone: 'sadness, nostalgia, grief from reminiscence' that demonstrate discrimination.



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### Examiner Tip

Be careful about using generalised assertions like 'very negative' and inferring (as here) 'post-partum depression'. Look carefully for evidence in support; the mother (if we assume this is who is speaking) may be too tired to wash the dishes but does not seem depressed. Comparison is likely to involve differences as well as similarities, as here.

This extract from another mid-range answer shows a mix of some speculation and more secure comparison based on significant detail.

The vulnerabilities associated with birth are explored by Simmonds. ~~The baby is described~~ The speaker <sup>describes</sup> ~~relates how~~ "the baby who can not speak". This highlights the isolation of a new born baby, and their detachment from reality, despite <sup>an</sup> ~~their~~ emotional bond with their mother. The speaker also describes the baby as having "the head of a drunk". A "drunk" has connotations of being out of control, confused and distanced from reality. The metaphor could also be a reference to the baby's father, ~~but~~ it is suggested that he may have been a "drunk" and their child is a reminder of him. ~~The verb also~~ The speaker also uses verbs such as "shifted, rearranged" to describe the treatment of the baby. The verbs ~~objectified~~ <sup>you are</sup> ~~the~~ baby, and ~~dehuman~~ suggesting the baby is treated ~~more~~ as an object possession rather than a human. This consequently conveys the vulnerabilities of ~~a new born~~ <sup>the</sup> new-born babies; <sup>ies</sup> they are unable to care for themselves and therefore become reliant on others for protection and guidance.

Similarly, Jenkins explores <sup>the</sup> vulnerabilities of those ~~stay~~ in the process of death, reaching the

end of their life. Jenkins refers to the speaker's mother's "classic ladies' model, gold strap - it was gone, / And I'd never known her not to have that on". This is suggestive of the mother's identity being stripped from her in death. The detailed description of the "watch" implies it was a part of the mother's identity, and without it, her sense of self appears diminished. The "watch" has been replaced with "a thick rubber band / With her name on it in smudged black ink". "rubber" is a cheap material which contrasts to the "gold" watch she previously wore, which connotes luxury and class. The <sup>adjective</sup> ~~verb~~ "smudged" also implies carelessness and



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#### Examiner Comments

The comment on 'the head of a drunk's' includes some speculation about the baby's father; unlike some candidates, however, this student explores the application to the baby first, and is tentative about the parent. The link to *Effects* is effectively made in the next paragraph, with some close reading of details of the mother's watch and its replacement by a 'thick rubber band'. This level of analysis is continued later in the answer, placing it in Level 4.



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#### Examiner Tip

Students are advised to keep referring to the question to ensure that comments address the topic.  
Don't be afraid to be tentative about a reading - but do provide evidence from the poem.

### **Question 3**

No responses were seen to this question.

### **Question 4**

No responses were seen to this question.

### **Question 5**

The Chaucer questions enabled candidates to show what they had learned. Most candidates were able to successfully select an appropriate second passage, though a few failed to specify their chosen extract. For this text, it is important to provide the line numbers of the second extract.

Candidates responding to this question (which was very much a minority choice) offered interesting discussions about aspects such as the impact of the absence of the rape victim from the story's resolution and the social and cultural context surrounding this issue. This was accompanied by significant recognition of the Knight's avoidance of the death penalty. Other successful answers explored the Queen's role in the Wife's tale and the way the Wife's attitudes were reflected in the Knight's dilemmas.

### **Question 6**

Candidates seemed to have been prepared well for this text and most understood the religious context; while some struggled to fully integrate contextual factors into their literary analysis, others were able to explore the social context in quite a nuanced manner. The majority of candidates also seemed to understand that the characters were literary constructs, and were able to connect them to their social and political contexts. Stronger responses discussed Chaucer's intention in creating this persona through whom he gives an alternative point of view.

Candidates focused predominantly on the ways the wife manipulated the scriptures in her defence of marriage and also her preoccupation with sex in marriage: 'To be refreshed half so ofte as he!' Candidates drew from the topic of the social role of women in Medieval society to explore their ideas, as well as the exploration of power relationships between men and women in marriage, though at times this drew them away from direct relevance to the text. Many chose to use another extract from the Prologue, which led to detailed comments on context and a close exploration of the question. However, analysis of extracts from the Tale itself often led to original and convincing arguments.

Stronger candidates debated effectively whether Chaucer's presentation of the Wife shows him to be a proto-feminist or a misogynist, presenting a Fourteenth Century stereotype to show that women were incapable of preaching. Developed answers, supported by evidence, were produced for either side (Chaucer "makes the Wife the poster girl for anti-feminism") and the middle; a Level 5 candidate argued subtly that Chaucer was following Wycliffe in challenging, through the Wife, the Church's hold upon the Bible but was avoiding repercussions by using an entertaining stereotype of the over-assertive woman to do so.

Some responses verged on becoming straightforward character studies of the Wife: a key distinguishing factor was understanding her as Chaucer's literary construct. Many candidates presented the Wife simply as the narrator commenting on, and challenging, her misogynistic audience/readership; once a candidate added the understanding of Chaucer's

manipulation of this (and, in the best examples, the sense of fun within this), then they reached an extra level of sophistication. The layers of narrative are clearly an important aspect of The Canterbury Tales, and this consideration was effective in pulling responses from Level 3 to Level 4 and from level 4 to Level 5.

This extract from the beginning of a Level 4 answer shows a clear overview of the text and the question.

Chaucer presents marriage in lines 35-58 as ~~some~~ an example of the Church's hypocrisy; ~~an~~ he gives the Wife of Bath a voice so that she can criticise the way ~~most~~ ~~all~~ men in medieval society interpreted the Bible falsely for their own gain. The wife is presented as a dominant figure, as demonstrated in the general prologue of the Canterbury tales which utilises lexis from the semantic field of <sup>the</sup> military, with words such as, 'baker' and 'spare share'. These suggest she will be a dominant wife, which is shown by her dominance of all five of her husbands. However, the fact the wife does not always succeed makes her more vividly human; many therefore often make the mistake of her being real and not Chaucer's construct.

Firstly, in these lines, Alison makes the point that in the Bible, religious men had hundreds of wives; 'The wise king, dauid Salomon' elevates him as a religious man and shows she is careful to not criticise the church itself. The colloquialism 'Lo' fronts the sentence and adds to the conversational tone; she is on a pilgrimage and wants to convey her strong opinion to the surrounding males.

The dynamic verb 'refreshed' is a euphemism and is humorous, suggesting she wishes to have ~~more husbands~~ half as many new partners as he had. This diminishes her re-marriages as unimportant, the exclamation mark conveys this in the phrase, 'I have wedded five!' Here she uses the male tactic of the time in quoting from the Bible in order to support their misogynistic views, as St Jerome did at the time. He was a large figure in the church who often criticised women as temptresses, and asserted that sexual appetite must be condemned. The wife is transgressive in the way she mentions him by name in her prologue, as opposed to shying away from his cruel philosophy. She is bawdy in her language; using euphemisms such as, 'gouenre' and 'bele chose' in reference to her genitalia, and using vulgar phrases such as 'pissed' on a wall. This reflects her unapologetic lecherous nature which would have been condemned by the church.

~~The phrase 'welcome the sixte' is humorous and effective in showing her confidence. Although she says her experience makes her opinions more valuable, she uses the male tactic of showing using 'authority' or the Bible in order to~~



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate is clearly aware, as shown in the last line of the first paragraph, that the Wife is 'Chaucer's construct'. There is some more general material from the Prologue, which is helpful though there is a tendency in this answer to range more widely over the text, and even other Tales, which diminishes some of its sharpness. The second page shows apt analysis of the language Chaucer has the Wife use and recognition of the cultural significance of her statements.



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**Examiner Tip**

Whichever text is being studied, it is a good sign when candidates use the author's name and indicate that characters (narrators or voices) in the poems are constructs – especially if the poet's methods are then analysed.

This second extract from the same answer shows the candidate relating the Wife to other characters in the Tales, and then proceeding to explore the second extract.

women as an example to cynical religious men who held sexist views. Chaucer also constructed ~~Griselda~~ 'patient' ~~Griselda~~ Griselda, in the Clerk's tale, who was abused and ordered around by her husband. Chaucer did this to create an opposite to Alison, whilst pointing out the ludicrous inequality between men and women in marriage.

Chaucer also presents women as not finding love in marriage; due to its purpose often being for financial and status reasons as opposed to for love. This makes Alison a sad figure, as she only loved one of her five husbands.

Chaucer also explores marriage in lines 796-821, where he depicts Alison and husband Jankyn's violent fight.

Jankyn is a student who went to Oxford; books at the time would have been very expensive. He reads from an anti-feminist text as he sees it as Alison's weakness. The use of intertextuality here would have been accessible to Chaucer's audience, as Greek philosopher Theophrastus and 'Saint Jerome' were dominant religious figures and known for their misogynistic

views; Theophrastus complained about women's constant nagging to their husbands. In this extract, Alison has ripped out a page of this sexist book; Janelyn hits her so hard she becomes partially 'deaf,' as mentioned in the prologue. This is effective as it evokes sadness from the reader and it makes her more human and relatable.



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**Examiner Comments**

The frequent reference to Chaucer here show the candidate keeps in mind the text as a construct. The brief remarks on the Clerk's Tale are relevant, but students should be careful not to spend too much time on general comments outside the extracts chosen.



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**Examiner Tip**

Ensure, as here, that contextual comments are supported with detail, such as information on the importance of the authorities cited by the Wife.

## Question 7

Candidates selected appropriately on the whole in their choice of reference. They recognised the attitudes towards women represented in the poems such as women as a sexual conquest. Many chose to compare to Donne's *Elegy: To His Mistress Going to Bed*. One response promoted Philips at the expense of the patriarchal arrogance in Donne's poem: it was fluent, sustained and well supported with close textual reading (if somewhat blind to Donne's use of humour and irony). Contextual factors were nicely interwoven into the responses, with pertinent comments relating to the position of women in society. There were some successful comparisons of speakers and persuasive elements in the chosen poems. While this is not a requirement, it supported a sophisticated thesis on the characteristics of metaphysical poetry. A few candidates were able to use this knowledge in a meaningful way to examine forms of love and the language used to address women in metaphysical poetry.



the fawn is being described, it is often described with words ~~connoting~~ purity with connotations of purity, cleanliness and holiness, such as: "milk-white", "pure" and "sweet". The ending of Marvell's poem brings forth a closer link to the <sup>story</sup> story of Jesus Christ as in the Bible (Book of Matthew), Jesus meets a Jewish woman who, as a sign of surrender and sacrifice, breaks a vase of alabaster with perfume. Similarly, the hymn mentions that: "There at my feet shall thine be laid, / of purest alabaster made." Like the Jewish woman in the Bible, ~~the nymph~~ <sup>Marvell</sup> suggests is essentially suggesting that 'his church' (those who believe in Christ) will surrender their lives to him as he was credited for the redemption and cleansing of the world. This is also a doctrine which was commonly taught by the Catholic Church in ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> 17th century Britain). Thus, Marvell presents suffering as a ~~golly~~ - Donne also does the same in 'Batter My Heart'. Donne expressed his desire for ~~god~~ <sup>the</sup> the (three-personed God) to "break, blow, burn, ~~and~~ <sup>"</sup> "him in order to "make me [him] new." The verbs "break, blow" and "burn" are verbs which inflict suffering - therefore, Donne shows that he is not concerned with the suffering he will experience, but the change that will occur

after. The poem clearly contrasts the Donne's previous erotic works, piece as it was written after 1629 (when he was ordained a priest). 'Batter My Heart' would have been a poem which respected by those who were also in the same status as him, as the poem highlights God's authority with respect to salvation and damnation ('the enemy' - referring to the devil) Calvinist



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

Having outlined the situation in Marvell's poem, the candidate considers alternative explanations: possible reference to the death of Charles I or to the woman who washed the feet of Jesus in the Gospel narrative. Some relevant detail is provided, though the argument does not really make clear why these interpretations might be valid and there are some generalisations about religious belief. Having spent some time on these, the essay ends abruptly without sufficient comment on the chosen Donne poem. This is a pity as the response is clear, there is some close reading of each poem and the context has clearly been studied.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Students need to ensure that both poems are covered adequately; general contextual information is less useful than comments closely related to the poems chosen.

## Question 9

Candidates who wrote about Donne responded with interest and engagement; most showed good knowledge of context, personal and historic, and applied clear or developed understanding of Metaphysical poetry. Answers referred most often to A Valediction Forbidding Mourning, The Sun Rising, Song (Sweetest love I do not go), A Valediction of Weeping and Nocturnal Upon St Lucy's Day, though there was an interesting range of other poems including excellent answers using To His Mistress Going to Bed and The Flea. Imagery and the combination of emotion and intellect were key aspects often referred to.

Some candidates appeared to struggle with the conceptual meaning of these poems. This resulted in an almost piecemeal analysis without linking separate points to larger conceptual concerns; better responses providing a discussion how the perceived dichotomy of these elements and Donne's integration of intellect and emotion add to his persuasive power.

Some students were able to see how the symbols and themes of the poems related to their literary and social contexts, although there were inaccurate statements about historical time periods and sweeping statements about patriarchy which rather undermined candidates' work. Many seemed insecure in their uses of the terms Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism. Whilst this is not actively penalised, those who had a secure grasp of the conflicts and contradictions which seem to have informed Donne's poetry were in a more confident position to interpret this complex poetry.

This is an extract from a Level 5 answer which shows a secure grasp of the ways in which Donne can be considered a Metaphysical poet.

As a metaphysical poet, John Donne's poetry is often a combination of ideas and imagery that are philosophically challenging, and subvert conventional ideas of poetry in the Jacobean society, in particular the dramatically emotional style of poetry, Petrarchan poetry. Instead, in many of his poems, Donne combines intellect with emotions, in many ways intensifying it, through its spiritual, and sometimes physical, presentation. In both, 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' and 'Song (Sweetest love, I do not go)', Donne combines intellect and emotion as in a theme of parts, and uses this combination to develop his metaphysical argument to his lover.

Both poems are written as a dramatic monologue to his lover, with 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' praising mainly him looking directly to her as ~~if~~ the reader views him regarding her "eyes, lips and hands", and in 'Song' he begins the poem with a metaphysical bold opening with direct address of, "Sweetest love" to his love. This gives the poems a sense of intimacy, and therefore heightened emotions through the intimate moment between the two, as well as demonstrate the intellect of the poem, as ~~it~~ <sup>they</sup> are involved as a persuasive argument to his lover. The use of an argument is a metaphysical feature, and the intellect used to form it proves, in both, his intense emotions for his love.

In 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning', he begins the poem with a hushed tone, on the intensely emotional theme of death, as "virtuous men pass mildly away", and the gentle verb of "whisper" demonstrates this hushed, intimate tone. The "virtuous" adjective ~~to~~ conveys Donne's intensity of love and the immense richness and superiority of their love, as he is comparing their parting through the concept of the death of the finest men. The argument goes on to rebutt rebarbarous ideas, by advising her to make "no noise" and the conventional, "tear-floods" and "dihm tempests" of rebarbarous loves, demonstrating he

believes their love to be of higher intellect and worthy of more mutual respect and understanding, and the comparisons show the formation of his argument, and how he is developing it intellectually to convey his strong emotions. From this, he goes on to ~~contrast~~ contrast their love to "dull ordinary loves", which incorporates ideas of Proterus's then-rejected theories on astronomy, and therefore intellectually challenges the contemporary ideas to develop his emotional argument. The next stanza begins with "But", adopting the ~~te~~ iambic tetrameter and places the stress of the syllable at the start, moving and expressing the reversal and the immense contrast between them and other loves, therefore intellectually proving through his argument his intense emotions for her, and therefore persuading her to do as he asks and not be deterred.

Similarly, in 'Song', Donne uses a metaphysical argument to express his emotions and to appeal to her emotions to gain her trust and agreement. It is persuasive, as it is addressed directly to his "sweetest love", and contrasts by the use of "but", similar to "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" that ~~the~~ what she thinks greater what he feels is true, in that he does not leave for "unweariness", and it is not for lack of love for her. In the

argument, he shows how there is not "a better love" for him, demonstrating through the intellectual presentation that their love is the epitome of true love, ~~similar to~~ similar to the comparison to the "elemented" love of in 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning'. Donne uses rhetorical questions in 'Song', ~~subjects~~, in order to persuade the lover of his emotions, asking her questions about "good posture", and using it to persuade her not to dwell on "bad chance", therefore intellectually demonstrating his emotions by using a range of persuasive techniques. Similar to 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning', Donne ~~addresses Petrarchan ideas~~ incorporates Petrarchan ideas of "high" and "weep it", and subverts them



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

Although comparison of poems is not required in Section B, this candidate makes good use of both poems to bring out aspects of the topic in the question. Moving easily across the poems, the argument becomes increasingly cogent, with relevant contextual material. The level of detail is impressive.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

A well-chosen second poem will enable students to address the topic more effectively. There is no need to compare them, so they can be used to contrast each other, or illustrate different aspects of the poet's craft.

## Question 10

Candidates frequently used Holy Sonnet X ('Death be not proud') along with the set Holy Sonnet VI in their responses. Donne's use of poetic form to present death and his use of imagery were explored substantially. Contextual confusion led to some difficulty about contemporary beliefs; however, this was often successfully linked to the knowledge that Donne's poems were originally written for a small private readership. More accurate knowledge and understanding of biographical details led to fruitful links between Donne's past life and his fear of what awaited him after death.

This is an extract from a Level 4 answer.

Considered to be one of the greatest metaphysical poets to have lived, Donne presents and challenges the most intense of human emotions and conditions, as death drives his poems, 'Holy Sonnet VI' and, 'Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness'. Both incorporate religious concepts, indicative of the importance of religion in both Elizabethan and Jacobean societies. This ~~perhaps more subtle in 'Holy Sonnet VI'~~ in these poems, religion appears to be a source of ~~comfort~~ <sup>with an approach to death</sup> ~~allowing~~ <sup>suppress</sup> the voice to ~~overcome~~ his religious torment. ~~life~~. As John Carey stated, "the first thing you need to know about Donne is that he ~~betrayed his faith~~ <sup>was a fanatic</sup>; the second, that he betrayed his faith", where his qualms with apostasy are overcome in such lines as, "So fall my sin" (Holy Sonnet VI) and, "the simplicity of

"tuning] the instrument here 'at the door' <sup>#</sup>, having ~~been~~ reached heaven. <sup>#</sup> (Hymn to God)

Donne's linguistic choices exemplify his acceptance of death <sup>in both poems</sup>. There is a measured tone in the ~~regular~~ iambic pentameter of 'Hymn to God' as well as the regular rhyme scheme that is also found in 'Holy Sonnet VI'. A semantic field of finality in 'Holy Sonnet VI' opens the poem, as seen in the "last scene", "last mile", "last pace" and "last inch", <sup>phrases</sup> that draw imagery from a range of fields, thus suggesting an acceptance of the end of all aspects of his life. He also incorporates <sup>astrology, cosmology and</sup> imagery pertaining to exploration in 'Hymn to God', providing a visual representation for his metaphysical



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The response opens with quotations from critics which, while they provide general literary context, don't advance the candidate's response much. Fortunately, the essay develops a more grounded and detailed approach by the second page and includes more specific reference to the religious context later in the answer.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Be sparing with general contextual information. Quotations from critics who may have provided useful support during study of the texts are not required and may lack relevance to the poems and topic in the question.

## Question 11

Candidates appeared to know the poems well and were able to make sensible and informed selections for the second poem. It was clear that most candidates understood some of the contextual aspects to the poems, although in many cases this was limited to biographical comments about the poets and references to nature. Centres could be encouraged to take a wider view of the political and social context of the Romantics.

The question allowed the candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of Romanticism and its principles. Contextual issues were addressed (particularly reference to French and Industrial Revolution and Romantic preoccupation with the Sublime). Examiners saw some exceptional responses for these questions where candidates were able to integrate context with close literary analysis to great effect, for example those who picked up on Wordsworth's use of words like "human soul" and "holy plan". Others seemed to be rather overwhelmed with the wealth of contextual information, confusing the biographies of the different poets or making a variety of sweeping assertions about love of nature, the Enlightenment or the Industrial Revolution without trying to tie them to particular aspects of the poems.

A wide range of chosen poems – including *Ode to the West Wind*, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *To Autumn* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* – showed perceptive understanding of the ideas and how they arose from the context of the times. A few candidates selected Blake's *London*, which could open a discussion of reactions to industrialisation and a desire to return to the natural world but left some struggling to make the poem relevant to the topic.

Students were able to comment on imagery with some success, and they were able to identify metrical patterns, but only a few were able to connect this to meaning or how metre or structure can be used to present an idea.

This is taken from the middle of a Level 2 response, which is clear but lacks development of the exploration of the natural world and its relation to the Romantic context.

whilst enjoying nature,

~~Shelley~~ Stanzas written in Dejection, Near Naples, on the other hand, conveys a slightly negative tone toward the end of the poem, as it follows Shelley's mental state at the time of writing, and explores the fact that despite being among the beauty of nature, his problems still exist. Despite this, however, Shelley still ~~conveys~~ portrays nature as glorious, he simply ~~explains~~ implies that it doesn't bring the solace ~~to~~ it

usually does and should. An example of this <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~  
~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> colours within nature that Shelley  
notices ~~and~~ are ~~also~~ 'blue isles' and 'purple noon',  
which both connote an element of gloominess  
and sadness, suggesting that Shelley's  
~~current~~ state emotions and mental state influenced  
his view of the natural world around him,  
allowing him to see the beauty ~~at~~ on a  
different level than he would have if he  
were happy. ~~At the time of writing, Shelley~~  
~~was in Naples~~ As the title suggests, Shelley  
was in Naples ~~during~~ when he wrote the  
poem, and despite being there from November  
to February, when the weather and natural  
world is particularly stunning there, he  
was unable to see ~~that~~ the scenery as he  
normally would have as he was facing large  
financial and personal problems. An example  
of ~~this~~ is his depression being present in the  
poem is the rhyming couplet ~~is~~ 'Smiling they  
live, and call life pleasure; - / To me that cup  
has been dealt in another measure', which  
uses both the metaphor, ~~to convey his~~ and the  
caesura to drag out the ~~s~~ line, ~~at~~ which  
mirrors the emptiness ~~and~~ Shelley was  
experiencing. ~~He gets this way for many~~  
~~reasons~~ His emptiness largely stemmed from

the isolation he was in, as Mary had estranged him following the death of his daughter Clara, which Mary blamed Percy for; his ex-wife Harriet, and Mary's half-sister Fanny had committed suicide; and many of his friends had too abandoned him, ~~the~~ meaning he essentially had ~~some~~ no one ~~else~~ except the nature around him, which presents the idea that perhaps the natural world ~~wasn't~~ isn't enough on its own to create the solace and peace he once believed it provided.

In contrast ~~to~~ to the slightly broken rhyme for example the use of plosive alliteration in 'tis my faith that every flower' conveying ~~the~~ the extent of his appreciation of nature, as he considers every ~~flower~~ single flower, finding beauty in each individual element that combines to create the scene. The poem highlights Wordsworth's disgust and disagreement with industrialisation, a view that the majority of the Romantics shared, as he uses the repetition of the plosive alliteration in 'What man has made of man', the anaphora of this line being referenced ~~at~~ in both the second and last stanzas serving to emphasise

~~the~~ his true sadness at man's intent to destroy nature and replace it with urban/modern life. ~~This is similar to, I am not sure~~ Wordsworth wrote the poem whilst walking ~~at~~ through nature in the Isle of Wight, and ~~so this~~ he conveyed ~~of the destruction~~ sent a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds with the poem attached, stating that he was taken by the beauty of the nature around him, which suggests that his thoughts on industrialisation and his sadness at the destruction of the natural world within Lines Written in Early Spring stem from his observations and experience



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This extract shows the candidate discussing the chosen poem, by Shelley. The comments show understanding but remain at the 'straightforward' level. Contextual information about the composition of the poem, while accurate, is of a general nature.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Biographical information *can* be directly relevant to the topic set but needs to be related to details in the poetry. Here it is of a rather general nature, failing to make connections to Romantic views of Nature. Earlier comments on Wordsworth's poem were similarly quite general on 'anger concerning industrialisation'.

## Question 12

This was very much a minority choice. Candidates responses notably referred to *R Alcona to J Brenzaida* in comparison with Wordsworth's *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* and sometimes Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*. Candidates recognised the concept of how the past engenders feelings and how it is linked to context, accompanied by comments on the use of imagery and the use of form and structure to present the past. At the very top end, some students were able to comment on the relationship between the Romantic poet and the past, though this was rare.

This extract from the middle of a Level 3 response shows relevant use of contextual information, though it lacks development.

writer. Ultimately, Brönte wished to relive the moments of her childish past which contributed to the poem's element of time, as emphasised by the speaker's strong feeling of nostalgia. Adding on to this point, the elegiac form of the poem's narrative highlights the destructiveness of time, allowing the speaker to now re-imagine these experiences as <sup>those</sup> being held back in the past.

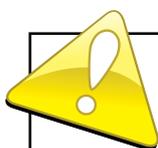
Much to a similar extent as Brönte in her poem, Byron reflects upon the memories he has made as now being part of the past, and not the future. Interestingly, his poem 'So We'll Go No More A Roving' was attached to a letter <sup>given</sup> ~~going~~ to Robert Southey, saying that he now feels old. There is a strong element of time in this poem, as emphasised by the speaker's frustration in the anaphora of 'So'. The speaker is frustrated that he must now reflect upon his experiences as being of the past which he feels he cannot relive: "And love itself have rest". Byron was known for his many sexual encounters, and this poem almost marks an end to his sexualised nature, deeming him unable to re-visit moments which are now in the past.

the form of  
Both poets have crafted their poems in a fixed quatrain structure which draws an emphasis upon their planned futures which have removed their freedom of expression, almost marking an end to their past, famous literary careers. However, for both of these poets, the memory of the past is so strong that the fixed narrative structure is often disrupted. In her poem 'R. Alcorn to F. Brenzaida', the



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate uses relevant material from Byron's life to supplement the comments on Emily Brontë's 'childish past' and nostalgia'. These are not developed, however, to explore how these might be considered an aspect of the Romantic view of the past. The comment on structure shows some understanding of Byron's craft but lacks detail.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Students are advised to build their responses around detailed exploration of appropriate features of the poems chosen. In this case both were relatively short so gave plenty of scope to look at language and structure as well as relating the subject matter to the topic of the past in Romanticism.

### Question 13

This was the more popular question on Keats. Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn and La belle Dame sans Merci were often selected as appropriate second poems. Candidates clearly felt sympathy for Keats' relative poverty, the bereavements he faced, his own poor health & early death and his fear of not being remembered. They could appreciate the physical and intellectual courage it took to accept melancholy in the search for joy and could more easily imagine his precise descriptions of listening to the nightingale or looking at the Grecian Urn.

Emotional pain was explored in some detail and how Keats uses form and structure. Melancholy was less frequently referred to overtly, which was surprising, and some focused more on suffering in general. The Romantic fascination with the femme fatale was a popular topic. For some less successful responses, much was made of Keats' illnesses without a due consideration of the poetic art or indeed use of language. There was some tendency to tie details of the poems somewhat mechanically to these contextual details, and an important distinguishing factor was the sensitivity to the poetry; those candidates who understood the varying power of the imagery or the onomatopoeic effect of certain details showed more sophisticated understanding of how, rather than where, Keats portrays emotional pain.

This is the first of two extracts from a Level 3 response.

Keats' preoccupation with emotional pain in pervaded throughout his poetry. In his most ~~pro~~ prolific year, 1819, Keats witness his first sign that he had ~~had~~ tuberculosis - he coughed blood. As a medically trained student, he was aware that death was the only outcome: "I know the colour of that blood." Furthermore, his father died ~~at~~ ~~e~~ when Keats was ~~at~~ 9 years old and his mother died ~~at~~ 5 years later. Therefore he was an ~~an~~ orphan by the age of 14 and financially unstable, hence why he had to practice a career that he ~~wasn't~~ wasn't ~~passionate~~ passionate about at the beginning. Understandably, this emotional pain is permeated through poems such as "Ode ~~to~~ on Melancholy" and "Ode to a Nightingale."



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate opens unpromisingly with general biographical details about Keats and his family rather than addressing the topic through the poetry.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Biographical details are best introduced alongside relevant text from the poems, rather than as unrelated background.

In this second extract, the candidate shows a much more coherent and relevant argument.

Throughout the poem, Keats reaches the sublime: "I will fly to thee". The imagery of flying away is <sup>form of</sup> escapism ~~to~~ from the emotional pain Keats experiences instead of dying. Keats reaches the sublime as he ~~reels~~ rejects "Bacchus and his pards" - the God of wine in mythology - and accept that he would be remembered through poetry ~~it~~ as he will fly away "on the viewless wings of ~~po~~ Poesy". Furthermore, just as in "Ode to Melancholy", Keats captures negative capability as he states "I have been ~~but~~ half in love with easeful death". The use of "half" conveys that he ~~has~~ ~~one~~ wants to embrace his outcome ~~not~~ instead of worrying about it. He didn't believe in eternal life, therefore he had to ~~e~~ enjoy life ~~now~~ on ~~or~~ Earth. Alternatively, the use of "half" also captures his realisation that when he dies, he won't hear "music" of the

thus no longer wishes to escape his emotional pain.

In to conclusion, Keats wasn't accepted by other poets due to his friendship with Leigh Hunt - the publisher for the Examiner - that labelled him a 'Cockney poet'. Therefore, Keats experience emotional pain from all aspects of his life hence why he ~~et~~ chose an ~~emotional~~ emotionally painful ~~and~~ quote for his grave:

"Here lies one whose name was writ on water."



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

Despite the unpromising start, the candidate proceeds to develop a much more relevant discussion about Keats' presentation of emotional pain. In the concluding pages, there is material, based firmly on the text, about Keats' longing to escape pain and to this idea of 'negative capability'. The final paragraph is less successful, introducing more biographical material that adds little, but overall the response is relevant and quite detailed.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

For a higher mark, the response would need to be sharper and more consistently focused on exploring the topic through the poems, building on the material about Keats' ideas already deployed here.

## **Question 14**

Ode to a Grecian Urn, The Eve of St Agnes and 'Bright Star' were frequently choices to accompany Isabella. Forbidden love was a popular aspect of the answers, as was grief. Keats' use of form and structure was discussed with varying detail and success. Imagery was referred to frequently and links between imagery and context were notable in higher level candidates' work. Where these were referred to in the lower bands, they usually has insufficient detail on the structural and language aspects of the poems.

## **Question 15**

Candidates referred to the natural world in terms of its significance to the speakers and linked to contextual factors relating to this. On the whole, candidates selected an appropriate second poem (though Drummer Hodge proved a problematic choice) and seemed relatively confident in linking these to biographical details of the poets. The social, historical and literary context tended to be dealt with less effectively; sweeping assertions, some of which made no distinction between the Victorians and the early Romantics, were often tacked onto the poems. However, a number of essays showed knowledge and understanding of spiritual doubt, increasing industrialisation or the relationship between individual poets and the preceding Romantic age, and this led to a more profound understanding of the poems.

## **Question 16**

This was the more popular choice for this anthology. Successful candidates looked at differences and similarities in Victorian attitudes to grief as reflected in their chosen combinations. There was quite a sharp division in responses: many showed less than clear understanding of the poems and context but others were detailed, discriminating and fluent. There was, in particular, a surprising lack of understanding of the sonnet form in the responses to Grief, amplified if this was compared to Remember. A popular connection was to The Dark House stanza from In Memoriam but the relative brevity of this stanza did not give candidates a great deal to build on.

## Question 17

Candidates predominantly chose to refer to Goblin Market as their choice of second poem, with Babylon the Great less popular. The consequences of temptation were referred to quite successfully and Rossetti's use of imagery was also a key feature of the responses. Rossetti's religious beliefs and reference to her use of Biblical imagery were often successfully incorporated into answers. Reflections about Victorian views about women were also a popular aspect of discussion.

This is the opening of a good Level 3 answer; the understanding of the poems is communicated clearly but contextual support is more straightforward.

ways in which temptation is presented - relate to relevant contextual factors

Ann: context - Rossetti helped fallen women - believed they deserved second chance.

- devout Anglican - potential feminist in some aspects?

The Word: Nightingale as her own demon/sin  
- a battle between good + evil.

Goblin Market: contrast  
between sin as goodness -  
purity and loss of innocence -  
chastity

Within Christina Rossetti's poem 'The Word',  
The theme of temptation is presented throughout.

It appears that Rossetti is essentially bringing  
to light an inner battle faced by herself in regard  
to perhaps what she deems sinful and what  
not displayed through the dramatic contrast between  
herself day and herself during night. -

essentially a battle between the light of day by  
which she is 'moved' and the temptation of  
the darkness of the night, ~~not~~ described to be  
"loathsome and low".

The fact that Rossetti, during her life, was a  
devout Anglican, whom abiding by her faith  
and can be regarded as orthodox, may suggest  
that she was faced with a pressure of inner

demon that she battled with, that may have been regarded as sinful but tempting - "a very minute void of love and prayer".

In comparison addition to this idea of temptation, the poem 'Goblin Market' is significant and pivotal in evoking the idea of temptation and its demerits. Despite being <sup>written</sup> ~~written~~ a children's poem, the subtle hints presented by the Goblin men to "come buy (their) orchard fruits" suggest an air of sexual advances throughout the poem. The idea of temptation is seen throughout the poem as the <sup>fruits</sup> ~~fruits~~ of the Goblin men are described in such vivid, seductive and promising detail, with their "grapes, fresh from the <sup>vine</sup> vine" and "pomegranates, full and fine", thus suggesting just how luscious and delightful they may be to try.

Additionally, within the poem "The world" temptation is elegantly presented through comparison to herself as the devil - "with pushing horns



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The response makes clear links to Rossetti's own beliefs about temptation and sin in these first two pages. The choice of *Goblin Market* as a second poem is apt and good use is made of the copious detail in that poem to develop the theme. Although there are brief references later to Rossetti's work amongst 'fallen women' and to the Old Testament story of the Fall, the essay could have progressed to a higher mark if more had been made of the ways in which Rossetti's presentation of temptation in these poems reflected her own religious beliefs and perhaps linked these to wider aspects of Victorian society.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Candidates should, where possible, attempt to make relevant links to contextual factors throughout their answers, rather than reserving these for a separate section.

## Question 18

An Apple Gathering was mainly compared to Goblin Market. The latter's length means it needs to be used judiciously – mere narrative should be avoided. Rossetti's religious beliefs were often mentioned and the connections between the natural world and human relationships well explored by most candidates. Changing seasons in An Apple Gathering was another popular topic for exploration by candidates and the voice of the narrator also featured.

## Question 19

Responses on The Road Not Taken often paired it with Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening; Millay's The Fawn was another choice. In remaining with Frost, a significant proportion of the discussion was given to his biographical contexts and in some case, what marks him as a Modernist poet. At the lower end, this material was quite general and added little to the response. The named poem's narrative voice was well recognised as a key aspect and an expression of the uncertainty that is a feature of Modernist poetry.

## Question 20

Snake, The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock and The Shield of Achilles featured as apt choices of second poem. Successful responses referred to the language being used to represent human nature and the use of voice. Cummings' free-verse and irregular line length were explored along with contextual references to war and devastation.

This extract is from an answer awarded full marks for its sophisticated exploration of Cummings' poem and Eliot's *La Figlia Che Piange*.

Both ee cummings in 'pity this busy monster, manunkind' and T.S. Eliot in 'La Figlia Che Piange' acknowledge the destructive nature of mankind. However, while cummings shows this to be an inevitable and escalating process on a larger scale, Eliot explores the personal nature of this destruction and how, ironically, it can arise from the attempt of creation. The most immediate example of this is the <sup>second</sup> line in cummings' poem, ~~the~~ "Progress is a comfortable disease." This describes the progression of man as not only a sickness, destructive in nature yet strangely biological and thus unavoidably inherent to our kind, but also "comfortable", the adjective implying that it is far easier for us to allow this disease to free reign rather than overcome it. However, the

emergence of inevitability arises most in the final lines of the poem, "We doctors know a hopeless case if -". Having already established the destructive nature of man, it is what is not ~~so~~ written in this line that is of most importance. We can easily assume this sentence should end in the ~~the~~ overused phrase, "we know a hopeless case ~~if we see one~~ [when we see one]", implying that the authority here (the "doctors") are aware that this destructive nature is hopeless and unavoidable in human kind. However, it is the avoidance of this, and the unfinished nature of the sentence, that is truly damning; this unfinished sentence either implies that the ~~speaker~~ speaker is too afraid by the ~~the~~ overwhelming nature of this self-destruction to acknowledge it, or too guilty to admit to it. "Doctors" does imply, after all, that the narrator or narrators are human, allowing us then to acknowledge that even our speaker has had a part to play in this destruction. This gives the poetry an unsettling edge - if even this figure of intelligence and authority, a doctor, must ~~submit~~ submit to this "comfortable disease", humanity truly is ~~monstrous~~ monstrous and inescapable. What darkens this image of destruction is the speaker's final suggestion, "there's a hell / of a good universe next door; let's go". Even here, our assumably human speaker does not seek to make amends, even if it is a "hopeless case", instead choosing to flee. We can see this horrific process will only continue, and Cummings even hints at this ~~the~~ through his lack of any ending punctuation such as a full stop after "go" - humanity will not stop but, worst of all, this is all presented as unavoidably and helplessly natural, inherent to the nature of man.

Eliot, however, shows this destructive nature of man to ~~be~~ manifest primarily in the everyday, on a far more intimate and personal level. In 'La Figlia Che Piange' there is ~~a~~ a semantic field of destruction, "leave... grieve... bruised... used..." These words are emphasized both by being arranged in rhyming couplets, and by being placed at the ends of their lines where a reader's eyes will ~~not~~ focus most before moving on to the next line. Clearly, destruction and suffering are vital ~~parts~~ elements of this poem, however, the intimacy with which this takes place is only slowly evidenced within the poem. For example, ~~besides~~ "you" the ~~only~~ pronouns used occur comparatively late in the poem, starting with "he" and "she" in the second stanza and only ~~transitioning~~ transitioning to the more intimate "we" in the latter half of the same stanza. Yet this only evidences an avoidance in acknowledging the personal nature of this destruction, which I feel reinforces the intimacy of this suffering further; it is clear there is a kind of romantic conflict ~~occurring~~ here, making it only natural that the speaker might be avoidant of some of the more personal or intimate aspects of this suffering. Yet destruction and intimacy are both clearly evident, only reinforced by the speaker's need to distance ~~himself~~ <sup>himself</sup> with changes in pronouns such as "he", "we" and "they", implying ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> personal struggle with the events described. These events occur, arguably, on a very everyday or immediate level; "Stand on the highest pavement of the stair", this is a lived moment, not a removed idea of destruction, and it occurs in an everyday moment in time that is lived by an individual, implied by repeated use of active verbs such as the verbs "stand" and "lean". We could argue that this poetic moment is so

individualised as to be impossible to generalise to the general account of human nature, yet I agree that Eliot's style and personal views reject an overly personal or individualised meaning. Eliot



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

The first pages of this response show a candidate in full command of a range of analytic tools which are used to create a sophisticated commentary on the poems. The argument develops later to explore how the features analysed can be considered as typical of Modernism and of the period in which the poems were written.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Close attention to detail can allow a candidate to reveal features which provide opportunity to explore aspects of literary movements such as Modernism, just as Victorian or Romantic descriptions of nature reveal those ages' preoccupations.

## Question 21

Eliot was very much a minority choice, though the work was often in the higher Levels. Successful use was made both of material about Eliot's own life and of relevant information about literary and historical contexts.

This secure Level 3 response uses *Whispers of Immortality* alongside *Gerontion*.

to the next life. This old man's 'waiting' is similar to Webster who 'saw the skull beneath the skin'; both of these understandings see death as inevitable and intimate. As Webster sees those around as 'decaying', the old man lives in a 'decayed house'. Eliot presents death as the prominent thought for both of these people mentioned.

However in both poems there is a hope of life after death. The title 'Whispers of Immortality' conveys the possibility of a life after death, likewise the old man must for with. He is yet to give up hope. Likewise the heavy mention of 'the word', meaning the word of God, in this poem 'the word is yet to be discounted' and the Word is certainly present, reference to 'Christ the sinner' who will descend on judgement day shows Eliot's continued hope that his he can be redeemed. \*

Both Poems see a certain detachment from death, 'whispers' only provides three views of death with two being that of metaphysical poets. Similarly, Gerontion's character of the old man is physically detached from death as he didn't fight in the ~~first~~ world war. First World War.

He may 'not' at the 'hot gutts', 'nor fought in the  
warm rain'. He is aware but not involved in this  
mass death. Whispers largely attempts to avoid death  
altogether, with Donne using the distraction of 'penetration'  
to 'all delay, 'Alayed the fever of the bone'. Likewise  
Eliot's perspective is largely filled with the carnal  
desire of Sweeney with 'pneumatic bliss' and 'subtle  
effluence of cat'. Eliot's decision to have these  
three views conveys his views in this poem, especially  
the ones he chose. Selection of the metaphysical poets  
lends hope to Eliot who like Donne sees  
death as distant and so will fill the time with  
pleasure until he needs to focus on 'the anguish  
of the marrow'. This contrasts to the immediate  
threat of death of the old man and so this change  
in urgency and focus on death conveys Eliot's  
transition from hope to doubt that is first seen  
in all poems in the Wasteland series until hope  
returns in 'Ash Wednesday'.

\* However whilst 'the word' of God is mentioned  
Eliot suggests that there is no 'right' to  
hope, 'unable to speak the word' he sees  
the world devoid of 'the word' of God making  
death fearful.

For both poems death is their end, in

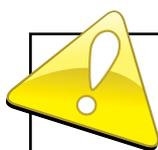
both the overall message is one of a lack of hope for life after death and both literally end with the allusion<sup>to</sup> of death. 'Whispers' ends with the mention of 'dry ribs', here the allusion is to the ~~shades~~ valley of death and after Eliot's description of 'Grishkin' and earthly pleasure his 'but' recognises this true end. In this poem Eliot hopes for immortality through an afterlife yet knows a lack of redemption, carnal desire and the possibility of the metaphysical being false leads him to his conclusion that death is the end. Whilst 'Gerontion' is far more conversational, with Eliot stating both 'we have not reached conclusion, when I suffer in a rented house' and 'thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season', it ultimately ends the same. Eliot once again recognises and uses 'dry' as a term. It suggests both death and a lack of fertility, both of which Eliot uses. His use of 'dry' symbolises a lack of spiritual focus in the world after the first world war, an absence of a redemptive figure, a father likely to bring rain and spiritual cleansing to the world. For Eliot a 'dry brain' is one absent of God, absent of redemption and one to whom death will be the end.

To conclude, for Eliot death has never been viewed the same throughout all of his poetry, in both of these poems Eliot begins to question his own possibility of redemption and exploring life as



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This extract shows the candidate conclude some apt comments on Eliot's use of Seventeenth Century authors and move on to consider the poet's exploration of death as it affects the characters in the poems. In the process, there is some subtle analysis of the ways the poems express both hope and uncertainty about the possibility of afterlife. This aspect of Eliot's work is given further relevance by reference to the post-First World War period in which the poems were written. The essay would have been even more successful if these features of the poet's work and of the historical context had been developed and made more explicit.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

For Eliot, sensitivity to his presentation of belief, unbelief and despair can be a helpful way of exploring the personal and historical context to his writing.

## Question 22

This question led to some detailed work on the poems chosen: *Sweeney Among the Nightingales* was one obvious choice. Candidates sometimes found it difficult, however, to use the material on settings to explore contextual aspects. The fact that the setting in *Sweeney Erect* appears relatively humble, if rather sordid, appeared to present a challenge to candidates who, while they knew something about the classical allusions in the poem, struggled to explain why Eliot should have begun with them. Since these kinds of intertextual references are a feature of many poems in this collection, students would profit from some attention to this aspect of Eliot's writing.

## Question 23

Relatively few candidates tackled this text. The set poem proved accessible and candidates were able to find suitable poems to accompany it. Contextual relevance was often rather sparse; teachers might like to consider ways in which students can be helped to identify aspects of the period and this loose-knit literary group.

In this response the candidate paired *Hospital for Defectives* with the same poet's *Felo De Se*. The extract forms the concluding pages of the answer.

The suffering of his partner is clearly presented when the doctor asks "Just why do you think she wished to end it all?" as there is a direct link between suicide and extreme suffering as that must have been the cause of her wanting to "end it all". The ~~the~~ portrayal of the doctor as being rather abrupt and insensitive reflects ~~society's~~ <sup>society's</sup> attitudes towards suicide due to Britain's Catholic/Protestant foundation in which ~~it was~~ it is deemed as sinful in religion. This could also be another type of suffering as society's harsh attitude towards suicide can make it difficult for victims who attempted to take their lives and ~~their~~ their families.

The metaphor "(There are some shadows which take long to pass)" evinces the idea that his partner is enduring a continuous battle as it will "take long to pass". This again portrays the extent of her suffering as it is described darkly as being "shadows".

Another dark description to present suffering is the pathetic fallacy / weather symbolism in "That night the chilly street was not as ~~dark~~ dark with its faint lamp as my intelligence, And since more suited is a question mark". The description of the time and place being "night", "chilly" and "dark" effectively clearly mimics the atrocity of events that unfolded due to suffering and the phrase "more suited in a question mark" suggests the uncertainty of the poetic voice which is incredibly common and expected of Blackburn as a Movement poet.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This section, considering *Felo De Se*, explores the poem with clear reference to the topic of suffering though it relies on some more straightforward explanation of the situation. The reference to the 'Catholic/Protestant foundation' is rather clumsy but does indicate prevalent social attitudes to suicide. More successfully, the essay concludes by noting how the uncertainty at the end of the poem can be seen as typical of the Movement. A similar point had been made earlier about *Hospital for Defectives*. The response scored an upper Level 3 mark; to go higher, contextual material would need to be developed more fully.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Candidates should be encouraged to look for indications of social attitudes in Twentieth Century poems that appear to be out of step with current values or behaviour. This could lead to exploration of cultural changes and the reasons that might lie behind them – all useful for identifying relevant contextual links

## Question 24

This question was answered by only a small number of candidates. Although some struggled to find their way into the named poem and to provide relevant contextual material, a few were able to see how the poems chosen revealed aspects of the literary period, such as an interest in the ordinary (failed love affairs, new suits and hire purchase) and the sense of social unease seen in *Metamorphosis*. Less successful answers failed sometimes to provide an overview of the poems, particularly *Metamorphosis*. A grasp of the narrative of that poem should not be the end of the response but it would help candidates appreciate the significance of important details.

## Question 25

Church Going was the more popular question on Larkin and produced a wide range of poems to accompany it. At the higher end candidates provided subtle links to Larkin's life and to wider contexts, with sound connections to stylistic choices seen in other poems. Less successful answers often made only general reference to context, with quite basic comments on the poet's presumed beliefs and world view. There is much that could be said about changing social attitudes, for example, as Church Going would illustrate.

This is the opening of a high Level 4 essay which uses *I Remember, I Remember* alongside *Church Going*.

The past is a highly prominent feature throughout the 'Less Deceived' anthology and has almost <sup>become</sup> ~~being~~ a characteristic of Larkin's writing, due to the macabre sadness and regret which often surrounds the past in Larkin's poetry. The past as a theme opens up many avenues to explore disappointment which is a key trait of Larkin, as he said himself "deprivation is to me what *ad hoc*ius were to Wordsworth".  
~~To compare the past to Church Going~~  
The two poems which I shall analyse Larkin's explorations of the past are Church Going and I remember, I remember. Both

adapt similar methods when exploring the past, such as the influence of the past is inescapable and it will consistently draw people back. In addition, both exploit the Movement's key feature of universality, to fully engage the reader in order to deliver a greater emotional response. Further, both utilise similar structural techniques to emphasise the themes of the past.

In Church Going, there is a consistent battle of rationality versus compulsion throughout, the poetic voice cannot understand his craving to return to the Church yet continues to do so. The heavy use of rhetorical questions throughout demonstrates the person's questioning of his own motivations and the grasp which the past seems to hold on him. This <sup>causes</sup> the audience to ponder the person's questions and whether they are chained to their past. In the fifth stanza the voice remarks, "and what remains when disbelief has gone?", this suggests that when disbelief has faded away one ultimately results back to belief. The two are actually intertwined and

people often sway from one to the other in uncertainty; the use of the rhetorical question in this instance is one which the voice fails to know the answer to and creates an overall tone of uncertainty. This uncertainty was most likely derived from the fact that post-war Britain was restless and didn't truly know what to believe in after the devastation of war. The <sup>mass</sup> deaths will have undeniably shaken many people's faiths, but as Larkin questions, "what remains after disbelief?" Perhaps, it is this uncertainty which fixates people inevitably back to the past, so that they can find something within themselves to believe in once more.



### ResultsPlus

#### Examiner Comments

The candidate begins confidently with an overview of the topic of the past in Larkin's poetry. This includes an apt quotation from the poet and reference to an aspect of the Movement. The argument then develops into an effective analysis of *Church Going*, with continuing links to the social and historical context of post-war Britain. This is a rare instance of a response where context forms the backbone of the essay without drowning out the poetry, though to gain a Level 5 mark there would need to be more close reading, supported by quotation.



### ResultsPlus

#### Examiner Tip

A secure grasp of the literary as well as social and historical context enables students to confidently explore contextual links through aspects of style as well as subject matter.

## **Question 26**

This question tested students' skills of literary analysis and those who attempted it were often mature and focused in their discussions and argument; some fully deserved top marks. *Toads* and *Church Going* were popular second poems, with the opportunity taken to explore contemporary attitudes to masculinity in terms of voice linked to contexts. Narrators and speakers were referenced too, though sometimes with sparse mention of the use of voice to compare Larkin's use of colloquial and formal language forms for effect. Sophisticated grasp of Larkin's craft included those alert to his frequent use of 'a three-part argument in order to conclude the proposal he sets himself in the beginning, and the final line is usually cryptic and thought-provoking,' as one candidate put it.

## Paper Summary

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

- Take time to read and reflect on the poems and topics set so that you can plan a shaped, coherent and cogent response
- Combine an overview of the poems under discussion with close reading of relevant details
- Be secure in your use of literary terms, illustrate them appropriately and above all attempt to explain why the poet might have chosen to use them
- For Section A, use the unseen poem to bring out specific themes and ideas in the anthology poem
- For Section B, ensure contextual information is relevant to the poems chosen and the topic set
- Make sure examiners can read your handwriting; if not, do something about it before the examination!

## 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>

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