



General Certificate of Education

English Literature 5741

Specification A

LTA3 Texts in Context

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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LTA3 Texts In Context**General**

This summer's LTA3 examination was a great success. Feedback from centres was almost unanimous in commending the questions as fair and enabling; examiners were impressed by the high quality of many responses and by the obvious care with which teachers had prepared their students for the demands of the paper. Now that the new set texts have had time to bed in, there were very few rubric infringements or instances of re-sit candidates turning up to the examination expecting questions on a text which is no longer set for LTA3. The small number of infringements encountered by examiners resulted from the pairing of two pre-1900 texts, denying the candidates any opportunity to meet the requirements of Assessment Objective 4. Once again, Thomas Hardy was usually the cause of this problem. Despite the warning issued in last year's LTA3 report, a very small number of centres used Hardy as their twentieth century poetry text – this is not permitted by the specification. While it is true that Hardy wrote poetry in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for the purposes of LTA3 and the ways in which the paper applies the Assessment Objectives, he is classified as a pre-1900 writer. This requirement has been regularly published in the essential set text information which AQA disseminates via consortia, subject presentations, its website and the previous editions of this report: all LTA3 centres should now be aware that *Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy* is a pre-1900 text.

Many candidates displayed an excellent knowledge and understanding of their set texts, exploring the writers' techniques with confidence and offering illuminating insights. Many centres had thoroughly prepared their students for the ways that this paper tests the Assessment Objectives: one examiner reported that "even the weaker candidates now seem to be aware that some kind of debate is expected in their responses to the twentieth century texts" and this undoubtedly helped them to achieve their full potential. Similarly, the most successful responses to the questions which test Assessment Objective 5 came from candidates who knew that they had to focus primarily on the text and integrate contextual information at relevant moments.

However, some candidates did not achieve their full potential, often because they did not understand how to meet the assessment objectives. Time was wasted on lengthy explanations of twentieth century context: unfortunately, this contextual material was largely irrelevant because Assessment Objective 4 requires candidates to debate the given opinion of their twentieth century set text. Those debates may refer to the views of critics, but they do not have to: candidates who included irrelevant quotations from critical sources did not gain higher marks for simply copying them out. Similarly, some candidates who attempted the questions focusing on a particular scene or poem seemed unaware that they were required to make connections to the rest of the text: answers limited to the given section did not gain high marks. Examiners also regretted the tendency of less confident candidates to recycle their practice answers to previous LTA3 questions: these responses did not receive many marks because they were inevitably very general – candidates must focus on the key words in this year's questions, rather than trying to twist last year's. The use of stylistic terms was also cause for concern: one examiner found candidates using a common checklist of technical terms which appeared in all of the centre's answers regardless of their irrelevance; other examiners were worried by candidates who labelled poetic techniques but were unable to explain or analyse how writers use these to create effects and make meaning. The vocabulary of some weaker candidates also remains a problem: "positive" and "negative" are vague terms, imprecise and unhelpful when analysing literature at AS level, yet they featured repeatedly in some responses – especially those of candidates studying Larkin. Likewise, candidates should avoid the term "meaningful" (which, ironically, is often used in a meaningless way) and the phrase "the poem

says” (which suggests that the candidate is unaware of the writer). Using paragraphs to structure the response is also helpful. Occasionally, there were more fundamental errors: *‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore* is not a Jacobean tragedy, Faust is not a Greek myth. The claim that the last scene of a play “ties up all the loose ends” usually signals a very superficial reading of the text and should be avoided.

Once again, the mark scheme for this paper worked very effectively. It can be accessed via the AQA website and centres are advised to share it with candidates to aid their understanding of the ways in which the Assessment Objectives are tested in this module.

SECTION A: Drama

‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore: John Ford

This is a popular text which, once again, produced some very good answers. The contextual aspects of Ford’s play, however, continue to cause weaker candidates some problems. While well-informed candidates were aware of the ambiguity which surrounds the playwright’s intentions (Is he attacking the absolute power of continental Catholicism? Is this a well-disguised satire of the decadent Stuart regime? Or is this just a play full of sex and violence which is guaranteed to pull in the punters?), those with a less secure grasp of the seventeenth century background often became very confused. Similarly, despite a lengthy warning in this report last year, many candidates persisted in labelling *‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore* as a Jacobean tragedy. It is not. Although the plot features many of the lurid revenge elements popular with audiences during the reign of James I, the play was written and first performed during the reign of his successor, Charles I. Centres are advised to ensure that their candidates are aware of this contextual detail: incorrect attributions get answers off to a bad start.

Question 1

This was an effective question which clearly discriminated between those candidates who were able to consider the ways in which Ford presents justice in *‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore* and those who were unable to address the keyword directly. Many of the less successful candidates wrote general answers about revenge, instead of justice: while it could be argued that the absence of any effective moral or legal framework in Ford’s Parma means that revenge becomes the only form of justice, few candidates who chose to focus on revenge were able to make this point in an explicit, coherent manner. Many of the best responses were founded on a mastery of detail which enabled the candidates to explore Ford’s use of the keyword with insight: “Justice is fled to heaven and comes no nearer.”, “Dwells justice here?”, “Strange miracle of justice!” and the choric “Wonderful justice!” frequently featured in these answers. There was much comment on the failures of those who should administer justice: Grimaldi escapes punishment for the murder of Bergetto because “He is no common man, but nobly born” and Vasques is let off with exile for “being no Italian”. Many noted how, in the absence of earthly justice, the characters must put their trust in God: Florio hopes that “Heaven will judge them for’t another day” and Richardetto claims “Heaven, thou art righteous”. Many argued that the Friar’s departure symbolises the disappearance of justice from the play, although others felt that his own sense of justice was warped: for their act of incest, the Friar gives Giovanni 42 penances (“Three times a day, and three times every night. For seven days’ space do this,”), while he condemns Annabella to a lifetime of misery married to Soranzo. Similarly, the brutal treatment of Putana attracted much comment as candidates explored Ford’s presentation of the idea that justice differs according to gender. Sophisticated candidates suggested that the play offers Ford’s oblique criticism of Charles I’s corrupt court - that the injustices of Parmesan society reflect those of the Stuart reign. Examiners were intrigued by the range of neologisms coined by candidates whose vocabulary did not include the word “injustice”: “non-justice”,

“unjustice” and “misjustice” all made frequent appearances. It is worth remembering that Assessment Objective 1 is tested in this examination and that AS candidates are expected to use “appropriate terminology and accurate written expression”.

Successful candidates:

- explored Ford’s presentation of ideas about justice with confidence
- selected relevant examples from across the whole play to support their ideas
- carefully integrated contextual information, while keeping the text at the forefront of their answers.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote about revenge rather than justice
- failed to engage with Ford’s language or dramatic techniques
- were unable to express their ideas in a clear, coherent manner.

Question 2

Many of the candidates who attempted this popular question produced answers which displayed a secure knowledge of the play: one examiner reported that “the candidates wrote particularly effectively on Ford’s use of visual effects in this scene and explored the heart symbolism with enthusiasm.” The keyword “appropriate” was often an important discriminator in the assessment of these responses: some excellent candidates did not achieve their full potential here because they confined themselves to accurate commentaries on the scene with no attempt to establish connections to earlier events, whereas candidates of all abilities who knew that they had to make links to the rest of the text were usually well rewarded (one examiner speculated that “perhaps it was easier to remember backwards from the end of the play than it was to work forwards from the opening”, as required in last summer’s scene-based question). Among the most popular links were Soranzo’s prophetic “You will wish each kiss your brother gave had been a dagger’s point.” and Giovanni’s “Rip up my bosom – there thou shalt behold a heart...” Much attention was devoted to the way in which Ford uses the title of the play as its last line: many felt that the audience is inclined to disagree with the idea that Annabella is “a whore” – either because the line is delivered by the corrupt Cardinal or because it comes in the form of a rhetorical question.

Successful candidates:

- had a secure understanding of the ways that this scene forms an appropriate ending to the play
- explored Ford’s language and dramatic techniques
- were able to make specific, detailed links to earlier scenes.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple accounts of the scene
- failed to engage with the dramatic effects Ford creates
- made little reference to the rest of the play.

***The School for Scandal*: Richard Brinsley Sheridan**

While nothing like as popular as *A Woman of No Importance*, *The School for Scandal* is still the pre-1900 drama choice of a significant number of LTA3 centres. One examiner reported her disappointment at finding so few Sheridan answers in her script allocation because “those who have studied this text usually write about it very well”. She speculated that the reasons for this are that “unlike Wilde, it’s historically so far away that candidates are less likely to become mired in modern ideas about class and gender” and because “the plot offers lots of

opportunities to write about dramatic effects”, as well as the benefits which arise from “the candidates’ obvious enjoyment of the comedy.” Unlike some of those studying *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, many Sheridan candidates apparently benefited from some careful reading of last year’s LTA3 report: this year, examiners were relieved to find very few claims that *The School for Scandal* is “a Restoration comedy”.

Question 3

Most of the candidates who attempted this question had a secure knowledge of Lady Teazle’s character and many were able to engage with the idea that Sheridan uses her for particular dramatic purposes in *The Rivals*. There were many references to the ways in which Sheridan uses Lady Teazle as a vehicle for his criticisms of fashionable society’s excesses (“I am not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.”) and hypocrisies (“When I say an ill-natured thing ‘tis out of pure good humour.”) Many candidates were aware of Lady Teazle’s contribution to the play’s comedy (she tells her husband “You should have adopted me, and not married me”) and that her character is something of a stereotype: the innocent country girl who is corrupted by the temptations of the big city. The significance of her name was also the subject of some comment from more thoughtful candidates. Less successful candidates tended to restrict their answers to Lady Teazle’s earlier appearances, ignoring the part she plays in the whole text. Her role in the collapsing screen episode was often considered by more successful candidates, as was her ultimate rejection of the School for Scandal (“Lady Teazle begs leave to return the diploma”), only to be ironically condemned by Lady Sneerwell as “a malicious creature indeed”. Some candidates with a well developed overview of *The School for Scandal* also explored the effects created by Sheridan’s use of Lady Teazle in the play’s Epilogue.

Successful candidates:

- explored the presentation of Lady Teazle with confidence
- explored the effects of Sheridan’s dramatic techniques
- made sensible use of carefully integrated contextual material.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple descriptions of Lady Teazle
- failed to consider the character’s role in the play’s later scenes
- were unable to appreciate Sheridan’s humour or his use of dramatic effects.

Question 4

This was the slightly more popular Sheridan question: most of those attempting it managed to engage with the bullet points, which provided a focus and allowed weaker candidates to move beyond a simple narrative account of the scene in their answers. Many candidates focused on how Sheridan uses this scene to present the mechanics of scandal and the ways that the gossip network operates: most were able to engage with the scene’s humour, particularly the effects created by the writer’s use of escalating exaggerations. Successful candidates placed this scene in the context of the whole play, linking it, for instance, to the events of Act IV Scene III (the subject of much excited speculation in the focal scene) and to Sir Peter’s fears of being “sneered at in the papers” back in the first act. A distinctive feature of less successful answers was the absence of specific links to other parts of *The School for Scandal*. Some examiners were also concerned that even able candidates sometimes failed to analyse Sheridan’s language and style - although they had managed to do this effectively when writing about their poetry texts: centres should remind their students that Assessment Objective 3 is tested through both of their LTA3 texts.

Successful candidates:

- established the section's importance by making connections to the rest of the play
- made effective use of the question's bullet points
- explored the dramatic effects that Sheridan creates in this section.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple accounts of the given scene
- were unable to link the scene to the rest of the play
- were unable to analyse Sheridan's dramatic techniques.

A Woman of No Importance: Oscar Wilde

A Woman of No Importance remains by far the most popular of LTA3's pre-1900 drama texts. Candidates often respond to Wilde with enthusiasm and enjoyment, but it is worth sounding a note of caution here. One examiner reported that "this text is much more subtle and demanding than people realise. It's fun to read but it's not always easy to get at the complex contextual ideas that lie beneath the surface of Wilde's play. Less confident candidates sometimes struggle with this complexity and the result is that they fall back on glib assertions which don't earn many marks." Perhaps the best advice that can be offered to protect candidates against falling into this particular trap is that they should try to maintain their focus on Wilde's dramatic techniques: exploring the theatrical effects which the writer creates is always a step in the right direction and is certainly a more effective and relevant approach than making general, unsupported claims about the play's Victorian context.

Question 5

Examiners were seriously concerned at the inability of many candidates to spell the word "woman", even though it is printed on the cover of the play and occurs a number of times within the text. Worryingly, some candidates did not recognise the word "hypocrisy" either, but they chose to attempt this question anyway. In the worst cases, this produced statements such as "Lord Illingworth and Lady Hunstanton are both members of the hypocrisy"; elsewhere, the word was used to mean anything faintly unfair or vaguely improper, resulting in very general answers with only occasional implicit relevance. General answers were also the result of some misguided attempts to recycle practice answers to previous Wilde questions: candidates are strongly advised to avoid this approach – each question must be considered afresh. Those who were able to understand and engage with the question's key word found plenty to get their teeth into. The early example of Lady Caroline's hypocritical attitude to Lady Hunstanton was often quoted: she tells her friends that the host is "a little lax about the people she asks down here" then compliments Lady Hunstanton on her "wonderful power of selection". Minor characters such as MrKelvil and the Archdeacon, who both abandon their families for the social temptations of Hunstanton Chase, also made frequent appearances in successful answers. Similarly, Lord Henry Weston was often cited as an embodiment of Victorian hypocrisy: "No dinner-party is complete without him. What of those whose ruin is due to him? They are outcasts.", as Hester points out in Act II. Many candidates used Hester's speeches as a source of further relevant evidence in their responses to this question: the idea of "one law for men and another for women", for example, and Wilde's hard-hitting images of English society as "a leper in purple... a dead thing smeared in gold". Inevitably, the comparative fortunes of Lord Illingworth and Mrs Arbuthnot were given much attention: the techniques Wilde uses to juxtapose his life of joy, pleasure and success with her twenty years of sorrow (summed up in the line "The woman suffers. The man goes free.") were often analysed carefully. Close readers found convincing evidence of hypocrisy in every nook and cranny of the play: from Lady Hunstanton's line "You never mean a single word you say." to Wilde's subtle use of mask imagery. Some candidates tried to argue that even the essentially honest characters have been

tainted by the hypocrisy of Victorian society: in Gerald's case, as he tries to persuade his mother to marry Lord Illingworth for all the wrong reasons, this seems plausible – but those who tried to find hypocrisy in Hester's admission that she was wrong about fallen women were less convincing. Some made sensible use of Wilde's biography here, seeing him as a victim of Victorian hypocrisy, but they were careful not to overdo it: examiners were relieved to see little evidence of the excessively biographical approaches which were a feature of last summer's Wilde responses.

Successful candidates:

- engaged with the ways Wilde presents hypocrisy
- displayed a secure understanding of the text as a dramatic construct
- focused primarily on the play and integrated contextual information as part of a shaped, coherent response.

Less successful candidates:

- confused hypocrisy with aristocracy
- wrote general accounts of Victorian society, rather than focusing on the drama
- regurgitated pre-learned material or tried to recycle answers to other questions.

Question 6

This was the more popular Wilde question and it effectively differentiated the candidates who attempted it. Most responses at least provided an accurate account of Act II's opening, but less successful candidates did not go much beyond a few cursory references to the question's bullet points. More successful candidates remembered that this wasn't just a question about 212 lines of one act, but a question which required them to place this particular section in the context of the whole play. Another discriminating factor was the inability of some candidates to recognise that this scene is meant to be funny. Candidates who were unable to appreciate Wilde's use of irony and paradox often took the scene at face value: their literal interpretations produced some unlikely conclusions about the position of women in nineteenth century society. These weaker candidates often struggled to address the ways Wilde deals with class issues too, making some assertive claims which the text could not support. Similarly, some less successful candidates found it difficult to understand that Wilde gives these female characters distinct personalities and contrasting views. More successful candidates often showed their grasp of the whole text by measuring these women against the yardstick of decency which Wilde provides in Hester and Mrs Arbutnot. The function of this scene was much discussed: some argued that Wilde uses it to show the audience what these women really think; others felt that the dramatist's principal aim here is to show their snobbery through their sneers at the middle classes. Most candidates were aware of just how superficial these characters are: Mrs Allonby's admission that she is "quite an amateur" is indicative of the way that these women regard marriage as a game - an attitude to which Wilde returns in the play's later acts.

Candidates established this section's importance through a wide range of links to the rest of the text. Some noted that Wilde places this scene immediately after Lord Illingworth has uttered the phrase "A woman of no importance", forcing the audience to question whether these four ladies are actually women of any importance themselves. Others pointed out that, although she does not speak in this section, "the American young lady has been in the room all the time" and it is the hypocritical vacuity of what she hears which provokes Hester to attack these women ("You know nothing.") later in Act II. The section's reference to duty was linked to other examples of this key concept: Gerald tells his mother that "It is your duty" to marry Lord Illingworth – although his father's own attitude is that "duty is what one expects from others, it is not what one does oneself". Many candidates linked the character of Lord Illingworth to Mrs Allonby's "ideal man" speech and some explored the effects Wilde creates by contrasting this all-female scene to the later all-male scene featuring Gerald and Lord Illingworth.

Successful candidates:

- explored this section's importance with confidence
- had a secure grasp of the ways Wilde presents the women in this section
- established relevant connections to the rest of the play and integrated contextual information when it was appropriate.

Less successful candidates:

- produced simple accounts of the given section but made no reference to the rest of the play
- showed little awareness of Wilde's dramatic techniques
- ignored the question and wrote general accounts of nineteenth century attitudes to women instead..

All My Sons: Arthur Miller

All My Sons remains by far the most popular of the modern plays on LTA3: the "Double Miller" combination, which pairs it with Chaucer, is probably the approach to the paper seen most often by examiners. There was, once again, plenty of evidence that this is a highly accessible text which most candidates understand and enjoy. One examiner reported that this year's questions were particularly effective because "they seemed to inspire the candidates" and there were many interesting, thoughtful responses. A few candidates are still under the mistaken impression that contextual information will earn them marks when they write about *All My Sons*: it won't. Assessment Objective 5 is not tested through any of the modern plays on this paper, so time spent writing about Miller's Harlem childhood and his refusal to appear before McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee is time wasted. Candidates should remember that the dominant Assessment Objective for this play requires them to construct an informed debate based on the opinion contained in the question – candidates who fail to do so will inevitably be awarded low marks.

Question 7

This was a popular and effective question which successfully differentiated those candidates who chose to attempt it. The best approaches to the question were usually founded on some sort of working definition of what the American Dream actually *is*. There was a general consensus among most candidates that it has something to do with honest effort and success; that it embodies the idea of America as a land of freedom and opportunity where those hard-working individuals who begin with nothing will be rewarded for their labours by an improved quality of life. Many felt that Joe Keller fits this bill: Miller reminds the audience of his humble beginnings and presents the character as a determined individual whose self-belief has enabled him to build up his successful business not once, but twice. There was plenty of well-informed analysis of the techniques which Miller uses to present Joe's affluence: the nice house in the suburbs (the stage directions are very precise about its details, including its \$15,000 price when built); the frequent references to consumer goods and the post-war boom; the wealthy neighbours. Unfortunately, some less successful candidates stopped at this point and paid very little attention to the key word "emptiness". As one examiner reported, "this was the word which seemed to lead candidates into a more conceptual approach" and those who went on to explore the idea of emptiness found a rich seam of discontent beneath the surface of Miller's text: Chris' idealistic rejection of the family business, Jim's disillusionment with his career as a doctor (he lives in "the usual darkness") and Mrs Keller's profound misery amid the wealthy surroundings of her home were all given close attention. Although some candidates found it difficult to come up with any effective counter-arguments, Frank and Lydia often provided a useful example: they seem happy with what they have achieved although, as some sophisticated candidates subtly

argued, their superficial qualities may suggest that their existence is empty too – they just don't realise it. Less successful candidates were often vague about the American Dream: some wrote about dreams in general, which sometimes had implicit relevance, but those who tried to recycle practice responses to last year's "generation gap" question often came badly unstuck.

Successful candidates:

- produced engaged evaluations of the idea that the play shows the emptiness of the American Dream
- developed balanced debates which focused on the concept of emptiness
- explored the ways that Miller presents ideas about the American Dream.

Less successful candidates:

- made assertive comments about the American Dream
- showed little awareness of Miller as a dramatist
- tried in vain to twist or recycle pre-written material to fit the question.

Question 8

This was a popular question which produced many thoughtful and interesting responses: one examiner felt that it was the better of the Miller options "because of the way it enabled candidates to engage with the playwright's dramatic techniques"; another reported that "it worked very well at all levels". The key words "tormented by guilt" created much engaged debate: in general, those who considered both Joe and Chris came to the conclusion that, although the former has good reason to feel guilty, it is the latter who seems to be tormented by guilt (he "felt wrong to be alive" after the war) and that it is not until the play's closing moments that Joe fully acknowledges his own guilt. Many candidates found effective evidence for the ambiguity of Miller's presentation of both characters: Chris sees the family business as "loot, and there's blood on it" but offers to "make a fortune for" Annie; Joe's lack of clear thinking is summed up in the line "I was as guilty as hell, except I wasn't." Some candidates explored the alternative idea that Larry is the character who is most tormented by guilt: he tells Anne in his last letter that, because of his father's crimes, "I can't bear to live anymore"; others felt that Miller presents Kate as the character who is really tormented by guilt. Some candidates commented on Chris' additional burden of guilt when he drives his father to suicide ("I didn't mean to") and others applied the key word "hero" to his military career ("in the war they say he was such a killer"). However, less successful candidates were hampered by limited interpretations of the term "hero": they were either unable to grasp that the word might refer to the dramatic function of a protagonist or they became bogged down in unloading their notes about the classical Greek model of tragedy. One candidate with a neat turn of phrase pointed out that, as the play draws to its dramatic conclusion, "like the cylinder heads, the cracks begin to show in Joe too."

Successful candidates:

- explored Miller's dramatic techniques with confidence
- engaged fully with the idea of "the hero tormented by guilt"
- developed balanced responses to the question "To what extent does this claim apply?"

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple sketches of Chris or Joe, or both
- struggled to engage with the key word "hero"
- described the characters as if they were real people, showing no awareness of Miller as a playwright.

Comedians: Trevor Griffiths

Comedians retains a loyal following among LTA3 centres and, once again, this play produced many thoughtful and engaged responses. Several examiners reported on a regrettable new trend among the candidates who had studied this text: a tendency to unload large chunks of political background material, rather than focusing on Griffiths' drama. While the importance of the play's political dimension should not be under-estimated, candidates do need to remember that examiners expect an engaged evaluation of the given opinion and an informed response to the dramatist's construct: candidates who write general political essays are unlikely to meet the Assessment Objectives of this paper.

Question 9

This was the more popular *Comedians* question and most of those who attempted it had at least a basic grasp of Mick Connor's importance in the play. Candidates were usually able to locate examples of Connor's loyalty: he defends Waters in the face of Price's mockery ("That's not so funny...He's a good old man."), he refuses to change his act ("Challenor'll get the act I came with.") and he apologises for the events of Act Two ("Sorry if we let you down."). Many successful candidates explored the ways in which Connor's act confirms him as a true disciple: his insider's perspective on Irish humour is inevitably condemned by Challenor ("you might find being an Irishman in England fascinating, there's no reason we should") but it is a perfect example of Waters' doctrine of the "real comedian" who tells "a sort of truth, about people, about their situation, about what hurts them". Many candidates questioned the key word "only" and, in the course of their debates, evaluated the claims of other contenders for the title of "Waters' true disciple": Ged was a popular choice, especially because, unlike Connor, he has to overcome the additional obstacle of his brother's opposition to Waters. Price received much attention too – although many rejected him on the grounds that, even though his act tells the truth, they didn't find it very funny. Some perceptive candidates picked up on the biblical resonances of the keyword "disciple", going on to explore Griffith's use of New Testament imagery in the lines of Price ("You're gonna crucify the man, do the job properly") and Mc Brain ("Okay, when do I get the thirty pieces of silver?") in Act Three.

Successful candidates:

- explored the ways that Griffiths presents the character of Mick Connor
- were able to support their ideas with appropriate textual detail
- produced a balanced response to the question "To what extent do you agree?"

Less successful candidates:

- struggled to engage with the idea that Mick is Waters' only true disciple
- wrote simple character sketches
- found it hard to deal with the question "To what extent do you agree?"

Question 10

This was the less popular question, but it produced some fascinating and thought-provoking answers. Most of the candidates who chose the question had a secure grasp of the play's ending and explored its ambiguity in a confident, perceptive manner. Many agreed that the play ends on a note of despair – indeed, a significant faction argued that there is more than one such note: Waters' despair takes the form of repeated uncertainty ("I don't know what to say...I don't know") and Price despairs that "The Jews still stayed in line, even when thy *knew*". Some candidates felt that Griffiths' use of theatrical effects shows that he intends the audience to despair: the play ends in darkness and the caretaker's words suggest that nothing has changed. On the other hand, many argued that there is plenty to alleviate the note of despair: Price

expects the imminent revolution (“I wait. I’m ready.”) and there is a sort of reconciliation with Waters (“You should. You do it well.”). Waters’ enthusiastic response to Mr Patel’s talking horse joke (“I’m starting another class in May, why don’t you join it?”), re-affirming his stance against hate and prejudice, was also seen as a moment in which despair is banished.

Successful candidates:

- explored the play’s ending with confidence
- engaged fully with the idea of “a note of despair”
- produced thoughtful, balanced debates which considered the given view and suggested other possibilities.

Unsuccessful candidates:

- wrote simple accounts of the play’s ending
- struggled to apply the question’s key words
- were unable to engage with Griffiths’ dramatic techniques.

***Making History*: Brian Friel**

Making History remains a fairly popular text, although it is a minority choice in comparison with *All My Sons*. Friel’s play continues to stimulate those candidates who are fortunate enough to study it and, once again, it produced some very interesting responses. One examiner expressed concern at the inability of some candidates to engage with the play as theatre, treating *Making History* as if it were a prose text instead. The comparative popularity of Question 12 seemed to confirm this view: many Friel candidates shied away from the question which asked them to evaluate “the play’s most dramatic moment”. Candidates who hope to score highly on any of this paper’s drama questions should remember that examiners will expect them to analyse the writer’s techniques and explore the effects created.

Question 11

One examiner reported on the consistently high standard of the responses to this question: “there were many thoughtful and conceptual answers – this brought the best out of many candidates.” Some of the candidates who agreed with the given view paid close attention to the ways Friel presents the relationship between Hugh and Mabel; others argued that this isn’t the only love story in the play. Confident candidates explored the different kinds of love which Friel presents in *Making History*: O’Neill’s love of his country, for instance, and Harry Hoveden’s devotion to O’Neill. Many debated the keyword “primarily”, arguing that love is a minor element in the text and that other subjects (such as nationalism, colonialism or the nature of history) are much more important. Unfortunately, a small number of weaker candidates used this question as an excuse to churn out the thematic answer they had prepared in advance: they curtly dismissed the question’s given opinion and spent most of their answer writing about the theme which they had hoped would come up. Centres should discourage this irrelevant approach: before debating the alternatives, candidates must address the question’s keywords in detail.

Successful candidates:

- considered the idea that the play is “a love story” in a relevant, engaged manner
- analysed the ways that Friel presents love in the play
- debated the keyword “primarily” and suggested alternative themes.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple accounts of Hugh and Mabel’s romance
- were unable to engage with Friel’s dramatic techniques
- failed to debate or evaluate the given view.

Question 12

This was by far the less popular *Making History* question, although the few candidates who attempted it usually had the confidence to answer it effectively: some of the responses were highly illuminating. Examiners felt that the question was successful because it forced candidates to consider the play as theatre and think about the drama's effect on an audience. The best answers engaged with the key words "shocking" and "dramatic", evaluating the given section of the play in the light of these terms. Many thoughtful debates featured suggested alternatives: Harry's announcement of Mabel's death and the counterpoint effects of the play's ending were often cited as the scenes from *Making History* which candidates felt were either more shocking or more dramatic than the given section.

Successful candidates:

- explored the given section of Act 2 Scene 1 with confidence
- engaged fully with the idea of "most shocking, most dramatic"
- considered alternative scenes from elsewhere in *Making History*.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple accounts of the given section
- merely agreed with the view that this is the "most shocking, most dramatic" moment
- were unable to engage with Friel's techniques.

SECTION B: Poetry***The Miller's Prologue and Tale: Geoffrey Chaucer***

The Miller's Prologue and Tale is by far the most popular text on the whole LTA3 paper and candidates are usually very well prepared for the Chaucer questions. The warnings of previous editions of this report appear to have been heeded: the majority of responses now focus firmly on the text and integrate contextual material at appropriate points. Regrettably, this message has not yet reached every LTA3 centre: this year, one examiner reported on a centre where the candidates had been taught a checklist of Chaucerian technical terms which appeared in all of the responses to this text, regardless of the terms' irrelevance. This is an approach which should be avoided: checklists are no help in an examination which requires candidates to engage with the actual questions and to think about the text for themselves.

Question 13

Two centres objected to this question, believing that the quotation from *The Reeve's Prologue* which provides its starting point was an unhelpful distraction to their candidates. The objection was based on the fact that the starting point's source lies outside the set text. It should be remembered, however, that *The Miller's Prologue and Tale* is a text which is used to test Assessment Objective 5: "Candidates should be able to show understanding of the contexts in which literary texts are...understood". It cannot be denied that *The Reeve's Prologue*, just as much as the often cited *Knight's Tale*, is part of the context in which the set text can be understood, so the validity of this question is not open to dispute. This was not the first time that a quotation from the wider context of *The Canterbury Tales* has been used as the starting point for a Chaucer question and the approach is often used in other parts of the LTA3 paper – not least in the questions testing Assessment Objective 4, which almost always open with a quotation from outside the text. Strictly speaking, the offending quotation is not actually a part of the question at all: it merely provides the contextual hook on which the question hangs. Examiners saw little evidence that this question disadvantaged any candidates: one senior examiner reported that it was "very accessible to candidates of all abilities". Another felt that

this was a very effective question because it forced candidates to consider the ways Chaucer presents the characters – an obvious aspect of the text, but one which too often is ignored. Admittedly this was the more challenging Chaucer option, but most of those who attempted it were well aware that the Reeve is a carpenter by trade and understood why he takes *The Miller's Tale* so personally. Many candidates made effective use of *The Miller's Prologue* in their responses, noting that this is where the acrimony between the two characters begins: on the other hand, some unsuccessful candidates seemed to have no knowledge of *The Miller's Prologue*, even though it is part of the set text. Some particularly well-informed candidates displayed their impressive contextual knowledge by referring to the ways in which the Reeve's grievance informs his own tale: a mirror-image of the Miller's, in which students from Cambridge manage to seduce not only a miller's wife but also his daughter. Some close readers noted the similarity of the Reeve's name, Osewold, to the word "cokewold"; others explored the way that Chaucer's placing of the words "cokewold" and "thou art oon" at the end of succeeding lines creates a malicious effect which is the direct opposite of what the Miller's words *appear* to mean. Less successful candidates struggled to take the connection between Osewold the Reeve and John the carpenter beyond the immediately obvious – their answers sometimes degenerated into simple sketches of the latter character.

Successful candidates:

- gave thoughtful consideration to the reasons for the Reeve's grief, making close reference to the text
- were engaged with Chaucer's techniques and intentions
- made effective use of *The Miller's Prologue* and of the wider *Canterbury Tales* context.

Less successful candidates:

- were unaware of any connection between the Reeve and John
- wrote simple character sketches of John
- produced narrative accounts of the tale, followed by simple assertions that the Reeve would find it offensive.

Question 14

This was by far the more popular Chaucer question and it produced many thoughtful, engaged responses. One examiner described it as "a lovely question" because it enabled weaker candidates to engage with the writer's techniques in ways that were not apparent in their drama answers. Most candidates displayed a secure understanding of the ways Chaucer introduces Nicholas to the reader and many were able to connect this opening description with other parts of *The Miller's Tale*. Candidates often noted that Chaucer is deliberately vague about Nicholas' appearance (apart from the idea that he was "lyk a maiden meke for to see") and that our impressions of the character are formed by his abilities, his habits and his possessions. Close readers noted the ironic discrepancy between Nicholas' ownership of expensive textbooks like "His Almageste" and his need to rely on "his freendes finding" to pay the rent, connecting these incongruous details to the character's later acts of duplicity. Some candidates explored the way Chaucer's extensive use of polysyllabic words, such as "conclusiouns" and "interrogaciouns", emphasises Nicholas' intellect. Although one candidate thought that the song *Angelus ad virginem* "tells of when the angel Gabriel lured Mary away from Joseph to get her pregnant", most candidates had a secure understanding of the significance Chaucer attaches to Nicholas' musical talents. Candidates were well aware that Chaucer uses music as a metaphor for sex: there were knowing comparisons of Nicholas' "gay sautrie" with Absolon's "small rubible" and perceptive links to "the revel and the melodie" enjoyed by Nicholas and Alison later in the tale. There were occasional moments of confusion (Nicholas is not "an astrology student"), but there were also many illuminating responses: some candidates, for instance, used the fact that "allone, withouten any compaignie" is a direct quotation from *The Knight's Tale* as the starting

point for their exploration of the ways in which, even here, Chaucer is subtly satirising his own epic romance and the code of Courtly Love.

Successful candidates:

- explored Chaucer's presentation of Nicholas with confidence
- made connections between this section and the rest of *The Miller's Prologue and Tale*
- read the text closely and, in employing neat supporting details, showed their mastery of Middle English.

Less successful candidates:

- produced simple descriptions of Nicholas
- made no attempt to establish links between the given section and the rest of the text
- showed no awareness of Chaucer's techniques or intentions.

Selected Poems: The Brontës

This year, *Selected Poems of The Brontës* was very much the minority choice among the pre-1900 poetry options: examiners saw far more answers on Hardy than on the Brontës. The quality of the responses to the Brontës' poetry was mixed: some examiners reported on centres where the questions were well handled and the standard was consistently high; others felt that candidates were struggling with the poetry and were far too ready to fall back on biographical approaches. While a knowledge of the Brontës' background can undoubtedly benefit students who are developing their understanding of the poetry, there is always the danger of over-doing this contextual approach. Centres are advised to train their candidates to focus primarily on the poems and integrate contextual information at relevant points in the answer: examiners' reports confirmed that the best answers approached the questions in this way, often producing interesting and illuminating readings of the poetry.

Question 15

This was the less popular question, although those who attempted it usually had the sense to use the biographical details sparingly and keep their focus on the ways that the sisters' relationships are presented in the poetry. Some candidates stuck with the safe, relevant poems suggested as possible starting points, while 'On the Death of Emily Jane Bronte' was also used to good effect in the responses to this question. Some candidates argued persuasively that 'Mementos', while not overtly a poem about her family, anticipates the feelings of sisterly loss which pervade Charlotte Bronte's later poems on the subject. Less successful candidates often wrote lengthy biographical sketches of life in the Haworth parsonage, illustrated by occasional quotations from the poems, but were unable to engage with Charlotte Bronte's poetic techniques.

Successful candidates:

- explored Charlotte Brontë's poetry with confidence and insight
- made effective choices of poems that were relevant to this question
- paid close attention to Charlotte Brontë's language and style.

Less successful candidates:

- had difficulty in selecting appropriate poems to fit the question
- wrote biographical accounts of Charlotte Brontë's relationships with her sisters
- offered few ideas about Charlotte Brontë's poetic techniques.

Question 16

This was the more popular question on the Brontës and most of the candidates who attempted it had at least a basic knowledge of nature's importance in the Brontës' poetry. Candidates ranged across the whole collection in their search for appropriate poems and they found relevant evidence in the work of all four writers. Charlotte's use of natural symbols in 'Retrospection', the Romantic seascapes in Branwell's 'Penmaenmawr' and Anne's meditative 'The Bluebell' all featured frequently – while most candidates realised that almost every poem by Emily Brontë makes significant use of natural imagery. Less successful candidates were often able to describe the landscapes in the Brontës' poems with some accuracy, but struggled to analyse the writers' techniques or to engage with their intentions.

Successful candidates:

- explored appropriate poems with confidence and insight
- analysed the use of language and style in their chosen poems
- integrated biographical and contextual material in a relevant manner.

Less successful candidates:

- made inappropriate choices or wrote general answers about landscape
- produced simple accounts of their chosen poems
- made little reference to the Brontës' poetic techniques.

Selected Poems: Thomas Hardy

Hardy remains a very popular LTA3 poet; however, some examiners expressed concerns regarding the inability of candidates to produce answers combining an exploration of Hardy's poetic techniques with an engaged response to the contextual elements which shaped his writing. Too many answers relied on lengthy explanations of poetic devices (with little sense of whole poems) or large chunks of biography (with few references to the poetry). Inappropriate selections also marred some of the Hardy answers: despite the specification's requirement that candidates are familiar with the whole selection, some seemed to have a detailed knowledge of very few poems and resorted to assertive attempts at fitting those few poems to questions where they were of no relevance. Able candidates often identify themselves by their relevant, sometimes illuminating, selection of poems; inappropriate selections frequently identify candidates who are unable to break out of a pre-learned pattern.

Question 17

This was the less popular Hardy question and, although it proved to be a highly effective discriminator, examiners found the experience of marking it somewhat dispiriting. Their disappointment was the result of many candidates' inability to recognise or engage with the voice Hardy uses in the poem, 'The Ruined Maid', which provided the question's suggested starting point. Misreadings abounded as candidates responded to the poem at the most literal or superficial levels: many thought that Hardy is attacking prostitutes and condemning fallen women for their sins; conversely, many believed that Hardy is advocating prostitution as a viable and desirable career option for Victorian women: few displayed any grasp of the satirical or ironic approach Hardy takes in the poem. Although some candidates did not appear to understand the term "moral issues", those who managed to engage with the key words went on to select other appropriate poems for this question: 'A Sunday Morning Tragedy' and 'A Trampwoman's Tragedy' were the most popular choices. Weaker candidates often fell back on inappropriate choices, apparently determined to write about the poems they had prepared in advance, no matter what question appeared on the paper.

Successful candidates:

- selected appropriate poems in which Hardy presents ideas about moral issues
- explored their chosen poems in a confident and perceptive manner
- integrated contextual information while keeping the text at the forefront of their answers.

Less successful candidates:

- made inappropriate selections or struggled to engage with the idea of “moral issues”
- showed little awareness of Hardy’s poetic technique
- produced contextual accounts of Hardy’s time which paid minimal attention to the poems themselves.

Question 18

This was the more popular Hardy question: it often produced clear and relevant answers which maintained a focus on the ways the poet uses landscape in this selection. ‘Neutral Tones’, ‘Wessex Heights’, ‘Beeny Cliff’, ‘At Castle Botterel’ and ‘The Darkling Thrush’ were the most popular choices among the candidates who produced successful responses to this question: all five poems were used to considerable effect. Unfortunately, weaker candidates sometimes overdid the biography once again: although landscape is an important symbolic element in the *Poems of 1912-13*, the candidates who used this fact as an excuse to unload extensive accounts of Hardy’s relationship with his first wife did not score highly. Other unsuccessful candidates struggled with the idea of “Hardy’s purposes”: their treatment of the poems was largely descriptive, even pictorial, but they showed little awareness of Hardy as a writer and were unable to engage with the possibility that his intentions might go beyond simple scene-setting.

Successful candidates:

- chose relevant poems for this question
- confidently explored the ways that Hardy uses landscape in his poetry
- kept the poetry at the forefront of their answers, while carefully integrating any relevant biographical connections.

Less successful candidates:

- produced simple, mostly descriptive accounts of their chosen poems
- paid little attention to Hardy’s language and style
- wrote more about Hardy’s marriage than about his use of landscape.

High Windows: Philip Larkin

High Windows remains a popular LTA3 text, running neck-and-neck with *The World’s Wife* in the modern poetry stakes. Larkin’s poems produced many thoughtful responses but, once again, examiners reported their concerns about the ways in which some candidates approach the *High Windows* questions. Too many candidates still waste precious minutes of examination time writing lengthy biographical paragraphs about Larkin, rather than exploring his poetry. Too many candidates copy out imported critical opinions, rather than developing their own ideas in response to the view given in the question. Too many candidates spray the words “positive” and “negative” across their Larkin answers, even though these are vague and unhelpful as literary critical terms. Examiners also noted an increase this year in the number of candidates who are able to label poetic techniques but who cannot go on to explore the ways in which the poet has used these devices to create effects and to make meaning. This is a worrying trend: candidates should be aware that simply spotting stylistic features will not gain them a good grade – it is vital that they *read* the poems and *think* about the writer’s intentions.

Question 19

This was a popular and successful question which effectively discriminated between those candidates who were willing to engage with the keywords “gloomy old sod” and those who used it as an excuse to trot out all-purpose answers on how negative they think Larkin is. The engaged candidates had great fun with this question and most managed to find plenty of evidence that Larkin’s self-assessment is a fair one: ‘The Old Fools’, ‘This Be The Verse’, ‘The Building’, ‘Sad Steps’ and ‘Going, Going’ were frequently used in support of Larkin’s claim. Candidates often used poems such as ‘Show Saturday’ in their counter-arguments, while there was much debate concerning the comparative gloom of ambiguous poems such as ‘To The Sea’ and ‘The Trees’. More sophisticated candidates were often subtle in their approach: some wondered whether there is an element of self-parody in Larkin’s verdict, linking it to Jake Balokowsky’s view of him as “this old fart” and “one of those old-type *natural*, fouled-up guys” in ‘Posterity’, while others felt that the quotation shows us how much Larkin *enjoys* being gloomy, connecting him to the lighthouse-keeper in ‘Livings II’ who relishes the gloom of his own solitude. The less obvious choices made by some candidates displayed their overview of the collection: ‘Vers de Societe’, ‘Sympathy in White Major’, ‘Friday Night in The Royal Station Hotel’ and ‘Forget What Did’ all featured in interesting responses. Other candidates felt that some of the poems are not as gloomy as they might seem on first reading: ‘Dublinesque’ describes a funeral but its tone is not miserable (“There is an air of great friendliness”); we see “the eggs unbroken” at the end of ‘The Explosion’; the gloomy atmosphere of ‘The Card Players’ is lightened by the poem’s joke names and scatological humour. While the keywords “gloomy” and “old” received plenty of attention, fewer candidates paid much attention to “sod”. One candidate produced a very effective working definition of the term – “a sod is one who takes pleasure in deliberately upsetting others” – and went on to explore the provocative and malicious elements of Larkin’s poetry with confidence. Others felt that “sod” is a typical *High Windows* word and used it as their starting point for an analysis of the effects created by Larkin’s use of demotic language throughout the collection.

Successful candidates:

- produced relevant, balanced answers which considered Larkin’s view of himself
- addressed all the keywords and displayed an overview of the whole collection
- explored Larkin’s poetic techniques in a sensitive manner.

Less successful candidates:

- simply agreed with the given view
- ignored the keywords and merely wrote about how negative they think Larkin is
- showed little awareness of the poetic effects Larkin creates.

Question 20

This was the less popular *High Windows* question, but many of the candidates who attempted it produced well-informed answers. Those who argued that ‘The Building’ is the key to the collection often linked the focal poem to others dealing with illness or death, such as ‘The Old Fools’ and ‘The Explosion’. Many candidates employed persuasive structural arguments here: this is the second longest poem in *High Windows* and its centrality is emphasised by the way Larkin has placed it at the heart of the collection. On the other hand, some confident candidates argued that ‘The Building’ cannot be the key to the collection because, unlike most of the other important poems, it contains no swearing. Many candidates suggested alternative poems as “the key to the whole collection”, but this approach must not be used as an excuse to avoid the poem nominated in the question: candidates who dismissed ‘The Building’ in a few sentences then spent the rest of the time writing about another poem (presumably one prepared in advance) were guilty of gross irrelevance and did not score high marks. Some of the weaker

responses often consisted of simple, line-by-line accounts of the poem with little reference to the actual question: a worrying number of candidates made no attempt to link 'The Building' to the collection's themes or to other poems – it should be remembered that such responses are unlikely to receive a mark higher than those in the Band One range.

Successful candidates:

- explored 'The Building' with confidence and insight
- made perceptive connections between the given poem and the rest of the collection
- produced a balanced argument in response to the view that "this poem is the key to the whole collection".

Less successful candidates:

- wrote general answers which asserted, but could not justify, their agreement with the given view
- produced simple accounts of 'The Building'
- were unable to make relevant connections to the rest of the collection.

***Beowulf*: Seamus Heaney**

Beowulf is the text least studied by current LTA3 candidates and examiners saw very few responses to Seamus Heaney's translation this year.

Question 21

This was by far the more popular question among the candidates who had studied *Beowulf*. Most of those who attempted it felt that, although Heaney's Denmark is a society dominated by men, the critic was wrong to claim that "women have no place" there. Many candidates argued that women are presented as a calming influence in the savage world of the Dark Ages ("A queen should weave peace"), pointing to the vital part played by Wealhtheow in the ceremonies and rituals of Heorot ("queenly and dignified...offering the goblet to all ranks") and to the praise for Hygd, her counterpart at the court of Hygelac: "her mind was thoughtful and her manners sure". Some candidates considered the roles played by women in the lays of minstrels and poets: the stories of Hildeburh and Modthryth may seem like tangential sub-plots, but they offer an important commentary and a different perspective on the poem's main events. Many candidates noted the presence of women at Beowulf's funeral - "A Geat woman too sang out in grief" – and some subtle candidates argued that the poem's scariest monster is female, feeling that "Grendel's mother, monstrous hell-bride" is a far more terrifying character than her son.

Successful candidates:

- explored Heaney's presentation of women with confidence
- selected relevant examples from across the whole poem
- constructed thoughtful, well-balanced debates.

Less successful candidates:

- struggled to engage with the question's keywords
- were unable to locate passages which present or refer to women
- showed little awareness of the text as poetry.

Question 22

This was by far the less popular *Beowulf* question, but those who attempted it usually had a secure grasp of the whole poem and were able to engage with the ways in which it can be seen as an elegy. There were some sophisticated answers: perceptive candidates explored the

effects created by Heaney's frequent references to lost treasure ("that pile of rings...will go up with the flame") and obliterated cultures ("in the path of exile they shall walk bereft"), as well as the poem's cyclical form (it begins and ends with the presentation of a funeral). Many candidates felt that the poem isn't just a lament, however, arguing that it is also a celebration of heroism, loyalty and the Anglo-Saxon way of life. Less secure candidates tended to work through 'The Lay of the Last Survivor' in a line-by-line fashion, sometimes making simple connections to other parts of *Beowulf*.

Successful candidates:

- had a secure understanding of the term "elegy"
- debated the given view in an engaged manner
- explored Heaney's language and style with confidence.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple or narrative accounts of 'The Lay of the Last Survivor'
- struggled to understand the idea that the poem is an elegy
- were unable to engage with Heaney's poetic techniques.

***The World's Wife*: Carol Ann Duffy**

The World's Wife remains one of the most popular texts on this paper. One experienced examiner feels that "the questions on Duffy always seem to work very well" and that was certainly the case this year: candidates of all abilities responded with enthusiasm and their obvious enjoyment was shared by those who marked the answers. Examiners were particularly pleased to note that most Duffy candidates were aware of the need to construct some sort of debate in order to meet Assessment Objective 4: there were far fewer unbalanced answers, based on simple agreement with the given view, than in previous years.

Question 23

One examiner reported that this question "seemed to elicit the best from a wide range of candidates"; another felt that "this question took candidates right to the heart of the collection: it made them think and then defend their view." It was certainly a popular and effective question, producing an impressive range of engaged and thoughtful responses. Many candidates agreed that Duffy is celebrating women, especially those powerful enough not to be messed about by men: 'The Kray Sisters' and 'Mrs Beast', with their litanies of feminist heroines and icons, were often used to support this view; 'Circe' and 'Mrs Quasimodo' were also popular choices. Other candidates chose to focus on the poems in which Duffy celebrates motherhood and birth, such as 'Demeter' and 'Pope Joan' (as one female candidate reminded the examiner: "Men can't do that!"). 'The Devil's Wife' was the favourite choice for those constructing a counter-argument and there was much speculation concerning the poem's occult numerology. Do its five sections represent the five victims of Hindley and Brady? Can it really be a coincidence that 'Dirt' consists of three 6-line stanzas, creating a 666 pattern? Several poems, such as 'Salome' and 'Queen Herod', were used by some candidates to support the critic's view and by others to argue against it. Some thoughtful candidates argued persuasively that Duffy intends to attack men rather than celebrate women; some less successful candidates merely asserted this idea. As with the answers to the Oscar Wilde questions, examiners who encountered responses to *The World's Wife* were surprised at the candidates' frequent inability to distinguish between "woman" and "women".

Successful candidates:

- considered the ways in which the collection celebrates women

- explored and analysed Duffy's poetic techniques
- responded to the question "To what extent do you agree..?" by developing a balanced debate.

Less successful candidates:

- wrote simple accounts of their chosen poems but ignored the question "To what extent do you agree..?"
- struggled to engage with the idea of celebration or simply agreed with the given view
- were unable to analyse Duffy's poetic techniques.

Question 24

Although it was by far the less popular option, this question produced some engaged and thoughtful responses. Candidates frequently displayed a secure knowledge and understanding of 'Mrs Faust' then ranged across *The World's Wife* to establish links and to evaluate the idea that the poem provides "the key to the whole collection". Candidates often connected 'Mrs Faust' with 'Mrs Midas' or 'Mrs Rip van Winkle': with the former poem because it is also a study of greed and its consequences; with the latter because both the women seem to get along very well without their husbands (Mrs Faust "went my own sweet way" and Mrs Rip van Winkle "found some hobbies for myself"). Some candidates had interesting things to say about the form of 'Mrs Faust' ("it's like a shopping list") but others were confused about the poem's origins: Faust is not a Greek myth. When attempting this question, some less successful candidates struggled to show any grasp of the bigger picture: they wrote at length about a few minor details, selected in a somewhat arbitrary manner, but paid very little attention to the whole poem or to the wider collection – candidates are advised to avoid this approach.

Successful candidates:

- had a secure understanding of 'Mrs Faust' and of Duffy's techniques
- were able to connect the poem to others in *The World's Wife*, using it as the starting point for an exploration of the collection's key themes
- focused on the keywords "To what extent do you agree?" as part of a balanced debate.

Less successful candidates:

- were unable to engage with the idea that 'Mrs Faust' is the collection's key poem
- showed little awareness of Duffy's poetic techniques
- struggled to make links between 'Mrs Faust' and the rest of the collection.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.