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ISC 2015
ELECTIVE
ENGLISH

- **SOLUTION OF 2015**
- **COMMENTS OF COUNCIL EXAMINERS**
- **SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

Dedicated to all my lovely students. May God help you always.

This small booklet contains solution of ISC 2015 Elective English.

The comments from the council examiners under solution of every question makes this a very handy guide for students to understand what the council expects as answer from the students.

I hope that the students will find this to be useful.

- *Md. Zeeshan Akhtar*

01st January, 2016.

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ELECTIVE ENGLISH

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD – *Harper Lee*

Question 1

What treasures did the knot hole of the oak tree that stood at the edge of the Radley lot afford Jem and Scout? Describe how the interest in the tree ended. What in your opinion is the significance of this episode in the novel? **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

This answer required a thorough knowledge of textual detail plus analysis of significance. All items of treasures found in the knot hole were not mentioned by candidates, some of whom could not critically analyse the significance of this episode in the novel especially as it was spread across chapters. In other cases, the 'interest' and the 'significance' were well attempted, even if the narrative detail was missing.

Some candidates who wrote a long introduction could not devote sufficient time and energy to the main point of question and despite a lengthy answer, sometimes well written, could not score because much of it was irrelevant and only a fraction of the total marks was allotted to an introduction.

Quotes and / or points of critical thinking that enhance the level of answer were missing in many answers.

Suggestions for teachers

- Stress upon a thorough knowledge of the text - if necessary trace the sequence or enumerate / list points necessary to support direct questions. Key points could be underlined while the text is read in class.
- Accuracy of detail is a must.
- Demand sufficient written practice during the session with adequate training on how to write suitable introductions to long answers and understand the main point of questions. The focus should not be lost in irrelevant detail.
- Supporting key words / phrases that can be quoted should be identified.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 1.

Two oak trees stood at the edge of the Radley lot. One of them had a knot-hole. Well into her school year, Scout on her way back from school without Jem, as usual was sprinting past the Radley place when something caught her eye. It was **tinfoil** glinting in the afternoon sun. When she reached for it, she **found two pieces of chewing gum minus their outer wrappers**. Scout quickly ate the gum. Jem was angry with her for eating something from the Radley place and asked her to spit out the wad and gargle. The fear of the "malevolent phantom" was still very much there. After waiting for three days for someone to claim it, the children pocketed the **ball of grey twine** lying there the next time, and considered everything found there their own.

With summer upon them, Scout and Jem found more tinfoil in the tree. Upon opening the package, they looked at a **small box** patch-worked with bits of tinfoil collected from chewing-gum wrappers. It

was the kind of box wedding rings came in, purple velvet with a minute catch. Inside were two scrubbed and polished **pennies**. They were Indian heads, nineteen six and nineteen hundred. The children debated what to do with them. Finders were keepers for flowers and a squirt of milk but not money. The children decided to keep the coins safely and make inquiries later about who the possible owner could be.

In October, the children discovered **two small figures carved in soap, one of a boy and the other of a girl** in a crude dress. Scout afraid of "hoo-dooing" threw them down but Jem admired the craftsmanship. Upon closer observation, the children noticed the resemblance to themselves. Jem kept them away in his trunk.

Next, they found a **package of chewing gum** and this time Jem forgot about his fear of having anything close to the Radley place. The knot-hole then **surrendered a tarnished medal**, **an old spelling medal**. The biggest treasure was **a pocket watch on an aluminium chain with a knife**. The watch would not run but Atticus said it was worth ten dollars.

The children did not tell Atticus where they had obtained it from, but decided to write a **note** to thank their unknown benefactor. When they went the next morning to place the envelope in the knot hole, they were aghast to see the hole had been **cemented**. Jem kept a vigil by the tree and finally got to ask Nathan Radley if he had filled the knot-hole. **Nathan Radley admitted he had because the tree was dying**. Jem was silent but later asked Atticus if the tree indeed was dying. Atticus did not think it was. Jem stayed out the entire evening and when he returned Scout could see he had been crying.

The knot-hole was **Boo's way of reaching out** and trying to establish a connection with the innocence of childhood, which he had been watching, with amusement and care, over time. The cementing of the knot-hole was the adult world's response to this clear-hearted attempt. It was one of the ways that the **adult world with all its prejudices killed a harmless mockingbird that did nothing but spread its song, which Boo represented**. This episode therefore supports the overall theme of prejudice smothering harmless nobility.

The novel is also a bildungsroman, a novel about **coming of age**. While Scout's reaction to the knot-hole is childish, **Jem's is a change: from fear, scepticism, gradual understanding as he stares in the direction of the Radley home each time, admiration and great anguish at the blocking of this channel of communication**. His orders to discard anything found there and confusion about the ethical ramifications of taking things change to acceptance and when the hole is cemented, he stands there till nightfall, obviously crying at the injustice. It is a **precursor to the larger lesson he will learn** at the trial later.

Question 2

Discuss the various mockingbirds in Harper Lee's novel ***To Kill a Mockingbird***. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

Most candidates gave fairly comprehensive answers to this question, addressing all the characters that are considered the 'mockingbirds'. However, a few candidates who referred to Mayella as a mockingbird could not provide adequate justification for their opinion. Many candidates who succeeded in presenting the symbolic role of mockingbirds could discuss only the two main ones (Tom and Boo). Where Dill, Jem and Dolphus Raymond were mentioned, analysis was often sparse.

In some cases, the candidates misunderstood the meaning and context of 'mockingbirds' and interpreted the term as 'mocking' and 'ridiculing', basing their answers on how Tom and Boo were ridiculed by society.

A well-substantiated opinion was acceptable. Some candidates presented Atticus as a mockingbird and marks were given on the basis of justification of that opinion.

Suggestions for teachers

- This is an obvious and key aspect of the novel and teachers must communicate the significance correctly to students. The link to it being a sin to kill a mockingbird has to be made and analysed in the context of each character that may be considered a mockingbird.
- An opinion necessary for such a question must be supported by justification from the text. Candidates should be discouraged from including every character to be 'safe' – such generalisations are easily caught out as signs of insufficient critical thinking and understanding of text and rarely score well because in playing safe, candidates cannot provide convincing substantiation of the broad opinion.
- Teachers should read text thoroughly in class and discuss both major and minor characters and their symbolic role in the context of the title.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 2.

Atticus' philosophy is that it is a "….. sin to kill a mockingbird". When Scout and Jem receive airguns for Christmas, Atticus tells them that although he would prefer that they practise their shooting with cans, if they must shoot at living things, they must never shoot at mockingbirds. **Atticus explains that it is a sin to kill a mockingbird**. Clearly, this is the title scene, but the theme continues throughout the book. Miss Maudie explains why Atticus is correct – mockingbirds never do anyone any harm, and are not pests in any way. All they do is sing beautifully and live peacefully.

The mockingbird comes to represent true goodness and purity. The sin is in corrupting this.

Tom Robinson is one example of a human "mockingbird". He stands accused of raping and beating Mayella Ewell, but is innocent of the charges. **The town commits the ultimate sin by finding him**

guilty and sentencing him to death. In effect, they have killed a mockingbird, literally and in spirit. He was convicted the moment Mayella opened her mouth to scream. Ironically, his kindness works against him: his offer of help and his feeling sorry for a white woman cause his tragedy. After Tom Robinson is shot, **Mr. Underwood compares his death to "the senseless slaughter of songbirds".**

Boo Radley is another example of a human "mockingbird. He has spent his entire life as **a prisoner of his own home because his father was overzealous in punishing him for a childhood mistake**. **Boo Radley observes the world around him, causing no harm to anyone, and then saves Jem and Scout's lives** when Bob Ewell attacks. The sheriff determines that Ewell's death will be ruled an accident because **he does not wish this harmless good soul to be 'killed' by attention. At the end of the book Scout thinks that hurting Boo Radley would be like "shooting' a mockingbird"**.

By presenting the blacks of Maycomb as virtuous victims – good people made to suffer – Lee makes her moral condemnation of prejudice direct, emphatic, and explicit. The mockingbird represents true goodness and innocence that should always be protected. The title of To Kill a Mockingbird has very little literal connection to the plot, but it carries a great deal of symbolic weight in the book. In this story of innocents destroyed by evil, the mockingbird comes to represent the idea of innocence. Thus, to kill a mockingbird is to destroy innocence. Other characters such as **Dolphus Raymond** too are considered innocents who have been injured or destroyed through contact with evil.

That Jem and Scout's last name is Finch (another type of small bird) indicates that they are particularly vulnerable in the racist world of Maycomb, which often treats the fragile innocence of childhood harshly. **Jem** is another mockingbird. All the **three children** are innocent and shocked by the harsh reality of prejudice and injustice. Dill even breaks down. However, Jem suffers the most. It becomes his turn to cry. He condemns the system and the people of Maycomb until Atticus explains gently that he is being unfair. **He grows up overnight but, unlike Scout, suffers heartbreak and disillusionment**.

Mayella is sometimes considered a mockingbird because of her sorry condition, abusive alcoholic father and her hidden aspirations symbolised by the neat red geraniums. **However, she is not harmless, and whether out of fear or shame, wrongly accuses an innocent man and causes the death of a genuine mockingbird**.

Question 3

What is your impression of Atticus Finch as a lawyer and a pillar of the community from the way he handles the trial of Tom Robinson? Substantiate your opinion by narrating aspects of the Tom Robinson trial that illustrate the point. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

Very few attempted this question but many of those who did, wrote fairly good answers. In some cases, the details of the trial were not given and hence marks were lost since those details were necessary to prove Atticus' standing as a lawyer. On the other hand, some put down detailed narration of the entire trial but showed no link to Atticus as a lawyer handling it.

In some centres, candidates did not read the question well enough to understand that the answer needed an opinion of Atticus as a lawyer and as a respected citizen specifically based on the trial, which includes not just the events at the court house but also precursors and aftermath related to it. Answers included a general study of Atticus as a father, outside the trial.

Suggestions for teachers

- Students must be given practice in how to read questions and understand exactly what their focus is. Teachers should provide sufficient written practice and feedback on this key skill.
- Guide students on how to effectively use the fifteen-minute reading time, and how to divide writing time among answers.
- Part of the supporting information from the text should consist of key words / phrases / lines from text in the form of accurate quotes

MARKING SCHEME

Question 3.

Tom Robinson was a Negro who had been accused of trying to rape Mayella Ewell, a white woman. Racial prejudice being rampant at the time, the case came to trial with the odds stacked against the 'black' man even though the 'white' so-called victim belonged to the dregs of Maycomb society. Atticus Finch was given the task of defending Tom Robinson, for which he was criticised as a "nigger lover" by many in Maycomb.

When Scout got into a fight defending her father and questioned him about this, he said he had to take on the case despite the disapproval because if he did not, **he would not be able to hold up his head in Maycomb, nor represent the county in the legislature. He would not even be able to reprimand his children or worship at church. This case, which according to him "goes to the essence of man's conscience", affected him "personally"; and it was important to Atticus to stand by his principles before expecting others to do so.** He was firm that he had to first live with himself and that conscience did not live by "majority rule". He knew there was little chance of victory and that he was fighting a losing battle, yet he took a stand on grounds of principles, saying

> **Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win**

Besides the moral **courage** he displayed at this time, he was brave enough to singlehandedly face a group of antagonistic citizens **and defend Tom Robinson before a lynch mob**.

Despite the prejudice, he advocated **understanding and tolerance** and reminded Scout that no matter how "bitter" things became, "they're still our friends and this is still our home." When Bob Ewell spat on him, Atticus did not condemn him for anything more than chewing tobacco; he explained the action came from the humiliation Atticus had subjected him to on the stand, destroying his "last shred of credibility". **Compassionate**, Atticus was willing to suffer if it meant saving Mayella Ewell one extra beating.

Atticus was a **competent lawyer** and had thought things through clearly. He told his brother that the jury could not be expected to take Tom Robinson's word against the Ewells', but he had a chance to "jar the jury" and have a "reasonable chance on the appeal". During the trial he was calm, courteous, and clear. He **cross examined witnesses**, asking if a doctor had been called, insisting on detail of Mayella's injuries. He questioned **Bob Ewell, who first thought he would have an easy time with Atticus, to show he was left-handed and could have beaten up Mayella himself**. He questioned Mayella courteously and slowly **built a picture of the home she lived in, her life without friends and the drunken violence of her father. After questioning her about her testimony about how Tom Robinson had attacked her, he presented the idea that had he indeed done so, she could have defended herself better and the beating could have been by Bob Ewell. He then showed Tom Robinson's left arm was useless and crippled and that the injuries on Mayella therefore could not have been inflicted by him. While questioning Tom, Atticus brought him out as a decent helpful man who had been unfairly accused and framed.** In his closing address, he said that the case should never have come to court, and that Mayella had accused Tom out of fear that she had kissed a Negro whose only fault was that he had the "temerity" to feel sorry for a white woman**. He spoke of equality and integrity, and appealed to the jury in the name of God to do its duty**. At the end, when he left the courtroom, all those in the gallery upstairs **stood for him as a mark of respect** for his moral courage, sincere attempt to do the correct thing and the efficiency with which he went about it.

In the way he handled the trial, he vindicated Judge Taylor's faith in him. Miss Maudie explained to Jem later that Atticus had deliberately been chosen to fight a case that could not be won simply because he was the only one who could have kept the jury out so long. He was **the one Maycomb looked up to,** and was responsible for the "baby step" in the fight against racism.

Atticus was fair and unbiased. He **chafed at "Maycomb's usual disease**":

> Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don't pretend to understand

Despite his patience with another's point of view, he explained the bias of the jury in terms of racist attitude. He told Jem that whether the mob at the prison or the jury, otherwise "reasonable" men lose their heads when it came to taking a white man's word against a black man's. He vehemently disapproved of white men who cheated black men, calling them "trash".

Thus, Atticus Finch proved his mettle as an honourable, just and efficient lawyer, citizen and a pillar of Maycomb society, taking up a battle that he knew was a lost one, making a difference in the attitudes in his mild, yet courageous, and far sighted manner.

THE HUNGRY TIDE – *Amitav Ghosh*

Question 4

Comment on Amitav Ghosh's use of history and myth that surrounded the Sunderbans. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

This question was not widely attempted.

Very few candidates could really do justice to the question as it demanded a thorough and detailed knowledge of the text. Some gave merely the detailed narration of the Bon Bibi myth and ignored the use of history and other myths. Quotes did not form an appropriately strong part of substantiation in many answers.

Suggestions for teachers

- Ensure that students read the novel in detail and develop the skill to compress vast information into focussed answers. Adequate written practice against the clock is advised.
- Include some challenging discussion and written assignments too that call for high order critical thinking and writing skills.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 4.

Amitav Ghosh's greatest gift as a writer may well be his sense of place. A landscape, a city, a village on the edge of a desert: it is these images that we summon from his novels when we are distanced from them in memory. Perhaps this is what makes him such a master of the travel narrative, a form whose contours are shaped by places and their histories. His most recent book, The Hungry Tide, is set in the **Sundarbans, the vast, intermittently submerged archipelago, largely covered by mangrove forests, that forms the delta of the Ganges as it debouches into the Bay of Bengal. The region is supposed to derive its name from the sundari tree, as the mangrove is locally called; in his book, Ghosh speculates on whether the name may not more simply correspond to sundarban, beautiful forest, as many prefer to believe.** Two-thirds of the Sundarbans are in Bangladesh, only one-third in India: it is a region whose fishing folk easily traverse the imaginary boundaries of the modern nation-state, crossing, as the wind and the tides take them, the mouths of the many river-channels that set up a unique turbulence of fresh and salt water washing the islands of the archipelago.

To this **land discovered by the ebb-tide, bhatirdesh, as Ghosh calls it in a remarkable and poetic application of the term used in Mughal land-records**, come a young cetologist from the United States on the trail of a breed of freshwater dolphin, the Orcaellabrevirostris, and a middle-aged linguist who runs a translation bureau in Delhi. The two are thrown together by chance, and for a time the male translator, Kanai Dutt, accompanies the female scientist, Piya Roy, as an unofficial interpreter. The novel is not really about their developing acquaintance. Much more centrally and in a far more extended way, **it is about the many histories of the region they have come to**. Kanai's aunt Nilima has lived in one of the islands for years; she sends for him after the discovery of a **diary belonging to her long-dead husband Nirmal**, a Marxist schoolteacher whose withdrawal from political activism had brought them to settle in a Sundarbans village. As Kanai reads the diary, its narrative of past events, hopes and disappointments (held together as much by the inexorable flow of historical time as by Nirmal's constant evocation of lines from **Rilke's Duino Elegies**), is interwoven with other stories. These include Kanai's own memories of a visit he paid his uncle and aunt as a child, his present experiences as a guest at Nilima's hospital, and **Piya's search**, aided by the fisherman Fokir, for the Orcaella.

At the heart of Nirmal's diary is a **historical event: the eviction of refugee settlers from the island of Morichjhapi in the Sunderbans by the Left Front government of West Bengal in 1979.** For the old Communist in the novel, like many others at the time, this act of state violence was a betrayal of everything left-wing politics in the post-Partition era had stood for. It was these very leftists who had declared, in the face of Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy's attempts to find land in neighbouring states for the successive waves of refugees who crossed over from East Pakistan in the forties and fifties, that they would not consent to a single one being resettled outside West Bengal. And indeed the conditions of such resettlement were harsh and alien. In 1978 a group of refugees fled from the Dandakaranya camp in Madhya Pradesh and came to the island of Morichjhapi in the Sundarbans with the intention of settling there. They cleared the land for agriculture, and began to fish and farm. But their presence there alarmed the Left Front ministry, who saw it as the first of a possibly endless series of encroachments on protected forest land, and the settlers were evicted in a brutal display of state power in May, 1979. Many, like the girl Kusum in Ghosh's novel, Kanai's childhood playmate who becomes the repository of Nirmal's idealist hopes, were killed. Nirmal, who stays with the settlers during those final hours, is later discovered wandering in the port town of Canning; he is shattered by the event and never recovers. As the last significant expression of the trauma of Bengal's Partition, **the story of Morichjhapi occupies a central place in the novel.**

But it is only one of the histories - part fact, part fiction - that the Sundarbans of Ghosh's novel enfolds. There are others: **the life cycle of the Orcaella, the story of its identification and the aquatic history of which it is part**; **the story of the port town of Canning, and the folly of its foundation by the British; the storms, named cyclones by the shipping inspector Henry Piddington, which ravage the region with irresistible ferocity; the visionary ambition of Sir Daniel Hamilton, who bought ten thousand acres of land in the Sundarbans and set out to build an ideal community; the tale of Bon Bibi and her worship, recounted in many folk epics, fusing Muslim and Hindu faith; and of course the present histories of Kanai, Nilima, Piya, Fokir, Fokir's wife Moyna and their son Tutul, among others. In a land regularly obliterated, at least in part, by the flood tide or by the huge tidal waves dredged up by cyclones (one of which marks the novel's climax), Ghosh makes us aware of the sedimentation of human history, the layers of past knowledge, experience and memory that constitute our human sense of place**.

Ghosh's sense of Bengali social history is, as always, unerring and profound. One of the most moving things in the novel is the textual tenor, at once perceptive and self-deceived, of Nirmal's diary, especially as it stands framed by the more robust and enduring social activism of his wife Nilima, and by the common sense of his companion on his last journey, the fisherman Horen Naskor.

(*suitably chosen quotes of candidate's choice to be credited)*

Question 5

Give an account of what Sir Daniel Hamilton did to achieve his dream in the Sunderbans. **[20]**
After his death, what was the ultimate outcome of all his efforts?

Comments of Examiners

The first part of the question was attempted well, but the 'outcome' was left out. A few candidates managed to write a line or two on it. Despite it being a straightforward question, it was attempted by very few candidates, perhaps because of the depth of textual knowledge required.

Quotes were lacking in many answers.

Suggestions for teachers

- Teachers must guide students on how to read a question and judge the balance in the answer.
- Quotes from texts must be strategically placed. They must be accurate.
- Teachers must provide practice in identifying relevant facts from text and collating them in an organised manner to address complete question.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 5.

His dream:

Sir Daniel Hamilton (pictured in stockings and knee breeches, wearing buckled shoes and a jacket with brass buttons) had been schooled in Scotland that life's most important lesson is **"Labour conquers everything**".

He came to India to seek his fortune, joined MacKinnon and McKenzie in Calcutta and worked hard, being the only ticket agent selling hundreds of tickets (monipolikapitalist I) land, unlike others, he did not take his money and leave or spent it all on places and luxuries. Instead, he sailed towards the Bay of Bengal while other sahebs and mems revelled. **He wondered why no one lived here** and this valuable soil was allowed to lie fallow and was told that ". People lived here once, but they were driven away by tempests and tides, tigers and crocodiles."

Since this was no remote or lonely frontier, he asked, "But if people lived here once, why shouldn't they again?" Considering this area to be India's doormat, **he envisioned a thriving settlement in this place** and, upon his return to Calcutta, he **sought out knowledgeable people to learn about the hazards of the Sunderbans.**

In 1903, he **bought ten thousand areas of the tide country from the British sarkar**. (Many islands worth….Gosaba, Rangbelia, Satleja – these were all his.) Later, he **added Lusibari** to these islands and wanted his newly bought lands to be called Andrewpur, after St. Andew of Scotland. People called it **Hamilton–abad** and the population grew. **S'Daniel gave names** like "Shobnomoskar" (welcome to all) and Rajat Jubilee (Silver Jubilee of some king or the other) as well as Jamespur I" and Emilybari", after the names of his relatives.

No one came to live in those places in the beginning but started pouring in (by the thousands) later for the land that was in their own country without having to take a boat to Burma or Malaya or Fiji or Trinidad.

And what was more, **it was free**.

S'Daniel welcomed everyone who was willing to work upon the condition that "they could not bring all their petty little divisions and differences. Here there would be no Brahmins or Untouchables….."

People came in boats and dinghies……hacked at the forest with their daas…… slept on the hammocks. …

The tigers, crocodiles and snakes had a feast, killing hundreds of people. **S'Daniel began to give rewards to anyone who killed the wild beasts**. The purpose of all this, however, was not money. **S'Daniel wanted to build a new society, "a new kind of country**". (run by co-operatives, with no exploitation). S.Daniel spoke with Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Thakur and many others. He followed Marx's Labour Theory of Value.

For electricity, there was a **huge generator** next to the school (now a discoloured wire that ran along the wall). He also put **phones** in Gosaba long before there were phones in Kolkata.

(Outcome:)

According to Kanai, S'Daniel ended up with "These rat eaten islands". After his death in 1939, the **estate passed into the possession of his nephew**, James Hamilton, who lived on the isle of Arran in Scotland and had never been to India before coming into his inheritance. **He had paid a very brief visit to Gosaba. The estate was practically now entirely in the hands of its management.** "And where was the shared wealth of the Republic of Co-operative Credit? What had become of its currency and banks? Where was the gold……" The present **state was of destitution**.

Question 6

What is your assessment of the character Nirmal in the novel ***The Hungry Tide****?* **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

Most candidates merely presented a narrative of events in which Nirmal was involved. The analysis of character with suitable substantiation was missing from most answers.

The question was not read carefully. Nirmal in the novel was presented through his profession, marriage, fondness for Kusum, leftist intellectualism and so on. The 'assessment' was missing. Hence, the character did not emerge.

The shortcoming was probably because in the novel the character of Nirmal is not dealt with in chronological sequence of his life. The novel begins with his death and incidents of his life and what they reveal about him come up not necessarily in the chronology of when they occurred. While the structure followed in the answer was the candidate's choice, Nirmal's life and the assessment of his character had to be complete.

Suggestions for teachers

- Students should be taught to analyse a character through an insightful presentation of the personality of the character and his or her role in the novel. Character analysis should include physical description, impact of character on incidents and other characters and their impact on him / her. Change evidenced in the character as he / she progresses through the novel must be brought out clearly. All opinion and analysis should be supported by textual illustration.
- In study of character, both facts and observations (analysis) are important.
- The tracking of events in Nirmal's life had to be done without being confused by the novelist's choice of structure and flow.
- Quotes must form a part of the answer.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 6.

The first we hear of Nirmal is during Kanai's conversation with Piya in which he mentions his first visit to Lusibari to his uncle and aunt in 1970 as a punishment. Subsequently **Kanai recalls his last encounter with Nirmal in the late 1970s** when, as a college student in Calcutta, he was hurrying to get to a lecture and had collided with someone browsing at one of the stalls displaying old books. It was his uncle, leafing through a translation of Francois Bernier's *Travels in the Mughal Empire*. Nirmal did not have the money to pay for the damaged book and Kanai made the payment to ease his uncle's predicament. Later Kanai read that this visit of his had been the result of despondency at the prospect of superannuation and regret at giving up writing and reading. Nirmal, a **school headmaster**, was obviously a book lover although he could scarcely afford to buy books and Kanai often imagined he would run into his uncle in a book shop and discreetly buy him a book or two. However, two years later, **Nirmal died in Lusibari after a long illness. Incoherent for many months, he had nevertheless spoken of Kanai and some writings he wanted to give him. Nilima had searched for them but in vain. About twenty years later, Nilima found a packet addressed to Kanai and had called him to Lusibari**. In death, Nirmal was responsible for Kanai's second eventful visit there.

Nirmal's presence is felt in Canning as Kanai reaches; and later in Lusibari when he returns to the Hamilton compound, and hears his uncle's words again. His observation on the "monument to excess" on the banks of rivers and a recollection of his silhouette like that of a "long-legged waterbird", with his flapping clothes and umbrella strike Kanai, who is unaware of the **mysterious conditions surrounding his uncle's final days**. Nilima tells him that he was found on the embankment in Canning, probably out in the rain since he caught pneumonia, and had lived only a couple of months after that. Nirmal's behaviour had become very erratic and he would disappear for days on end. He had died around the time of the Morichjhapi incident. It was assumed that Nirmal had been put on one of the buses to the resettlement camps but had been recognised and let off somewhere. No one could tell what had happened since by then he was talking irrationally, his only lucid moment being his desire to pass on his writings to Kanai. Later when his journal is revealed, **it is clear that the only one he trusted with his closest secret and passion was Kanai – and even in illness and irrationality, he was particular about that.** Nilima cannot erase the image of her muddied husband shouting, "The Matla will rise!" seemingly alluding to the story of the prediction that the river would rise and drown Canning.

Kanai remembers his uncle's **fondness for Rainer Maria Rilke's** *Duino Elegies*, and later when he reads Nirmal's journal, he finds translated lines from Rilke, whom Nirmal writes of as "the Poet" - are intrinsic to it. Kanai is right when he tells Piya that Nirmal was one of the people "who live through poetry" and are "hard to understand". The journal was written over two or three days in 1979 – a period when even Nilima thought he had given up writing - and deals entirely with Nirmal's experience and thoughts about Morichjhapi or 'Pepper Island', encapsulated in interspersed lines such as those about beauty being the "start of terror" when he describes the place. The journal also signifies Nirmal's yearning to leave a mark and his strength: he writes he was once a writer and has picked up the pen again to leave "some trace" of what happened there. This thought along with the fear that very naturally preceded it urged him to take up writing again. **The vulnerability, courage, belief and ability of Nirmal emerge in his last days**.

Thus, it is through Kanai's memories of Nirmal or his reading of Nirmal's journal that parts of the past, background and events are revealed. The story of Sir Daniel Hamilton and the establishment of an ideal community in the Sunderbans is Kaina's recollection of Nirmal telling him the story. It was a revolutionary's dream: the community at Lusibari is painted as Sir Daniel's vision of "a

new society, a new kind of country" through Nirmal's eyes and voice from the past. That **Nirmal was as impassioned as 'S'Daniel' is evident from his hurt** at Kaini's reaction of the futility of getting "rat-eaten islands", and his hope that "It may yet come to be."

In keeping with the writer's style and technique in this book, **Nirmal's story is not in chronological sequence**. How he reached Lusibari is revealed only after establishing his presence and role there. Nirmal and Nilima came to Lusibari in search of a "safe haven" barely a year after they were married. Originally from **Dhaka**, Nirmal was cut off from his family by the Partition and his choice of Calcutta. He "**made a name for himself as a leftist intellectual and a writer of promise**." Nilima was a student in his English Literature classes at Ashutosh College. Like many, she was "mesmerized" by his "fiery lectures" and her resolve to marry him did not falter despite her family's opposition. Inquiries into Nirmal's role in a Socialist conference unsettled him and following the advice of Nilima's family, comrades and Nilima, **he left the city**. He was of "too frail a temperament" to be useful to his comrades anyway. At first horrified at the prospect of associating with an enterprise of a capitalist, Nirmal was **impressed by Sir Daniel's attempts to address rural poverty and humbled by the realisation that in spite of their "radical talk", they had no knowledge of life outside the city**. The couple had not expected a utopia but were nonplussed about what was to be done with the settlement. Nilima was the more dynamic and practical one and drew the union and trust to greater heights. **Nirmal was not fully supportive** since he winced at the "stigma" of social service, but he did give the trust its name. While there was a sense of caring between husband and wife, particularly from Nilima's side, **Nirmal, wrapped up in his own thoughts caused her pain by withdrawing from her**. In the year of his death, he "became a stranger" to her, as if she had "become his enemy".

Nilima's appraisal of Nirmal is true. He had developed an "obsession with Morichjhapi". The cause had so much appeal for him because he was "in love with the idea of revolution." Revolution was the "secret god" that ruled his heart. Supporting the settlers was the "closest Nirmal would ever come to a revolutionary moment" and perhaps a delaying of acknowledging his age was passing.So caught was he in this that he became contemptuous of his wife's lifelong achievement. Since Kanai had never supposed his uncle to be capable of malice or cruelty he found it difficult to believe that the journal had not been meant for him as a "slender connection" to the outside world. At the end, Kanai tells NilimaNirmal did not think she would be "sympathetic" and she says for Nirmal it had to be all or nothing, while she was satisfied with a narrower sympathy.

Nilima also admits that there had been **rumours about Nirmal and Kusum**, which may have accounted somewhat for his "obsession". Kania understands what Kusum meant to Nirmal: holding fast on to Rilke's "life is lived in transformation", he saw Kusum as the "embodiment of Rilke's idea of transformation." His love for poetry also made him recognise what Fokir, unlettered though he was, was reciting: "the story that gave this land its life."

Morichjhapi had a transforming effect on Nirmal, who assumes the personality of a pioneer like Sir Daniel in recognising "the birth of something new, something hitherto unseen" in Morichjhapi. The difference was the while Lusibari was one man's vision, the Morichjhapi dream "had been dreamt by the very people who were trying to make it real." Recognising this gave the listless Nirmal a purpose: "I felt all of existence swelling in my veins." In his married life too, the gulf between the couple who had married for love was created by this attraction for the settlers and their dream. He kept his visits there a secret from his disapproving wife once the "seed of our mistrust" was sown. He was honest enough to acknowledge the sacrifices Nilima has made for him and that his "old man's hallucination" would jeopardise all that she had striven for.

Nirmal's is a strong presence throughout the novel, although chronologically he is dead even before it starts. **He is the poet, the revolutionary and the prophet-like figure** who predicts the river rising and the cyclone that strikes the mangroves and devours Fokir and his land.

A DOLL'S HOUSE– *Henrik Ibsen*

Question 7

One of the surprises of the play is that Krogstad is not really the central antagonist. Trace how this transition occurs. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

This question was fairly well attempted by some candidates, except for cases where the 'transformation' was abruptly dealt with. In other cases, character sketch of Krogstad was drawn without showing how he was or was not central antagonist.

Suggestions for teachers

- Students must be taught to give balanced answer after reading all parts of the question.
- Students to be taught the difference between a character sketch and tracing change or transformation in character when question specifies the difference.
- Quotes must be incorporated well in answer, especially from a drama text.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 7.

Although on the diabolic side, Nils Krogstad from A Doll's House does not have the same passion for evil expected of a central antagonist. **He seems ruthless at first, but experiences a change of heart** early on in Act Three.

At first it may seem that Krogstad is the play's main antagonist. Nora Helmer is a happy wife. She's been out Christmas shopping for her lovely children. Her husband is just about to receive a raise and a promotion. Then the audience learns that **Krogstad, a lawyer who attended school with Torvald and a co-worker, has the power to blackmail Nora**. She forged the signature of her dead father when she obtained a loan from him, unbeknownst to her husband. Now, Krogstad wants to secure his position at the bank. If Nora fails to prevent Krogstad from being dismissed, he will reveal her criminal actions and desecrate Torvald's good name.

When Nora is unable to persuade her husband, **Krogstad grows angry and impatient. Throughout the first two acts, Krogstad serves as a catalyst, initiating the action of the play. He sparks the flames of conflict, and with each unpleasant visit to the Helmer residence, Nora's troubles escalate**. In fact, she even contemplates **suicide** as a means of escaping her woes. Krogstad senses her plan and counters it:

Krogstad: So if you are thinking of trying any desperate measures… if you happen to be thinking of running away… or anything worse…. So you haven't the courage either, eh? It would also be very stupid.

Krogstad, shares a great deal with Nora Helmer: **both have committed the crime of forgery. Moreover, their motives were out of a desperate desire to save their loved ones**. Also like Nora, Krogstad has contemplated ending his life to eliminate his troubles, but was ultimately too scared to follow through.

Despite being labelled as corrupt and "morally sick," Krogstad has been trying to lead a legitimate life. He complains, "For the last eighteen months I've gone straight; all the time it's been hard going. I was content to work my way up, step by step." Then he angrily explains to Nora, "Don't forget: it's him who is forcing me off the straight and narrow again, your own husband! That's something I'll never forgive him for." Although at times Krogstad is vicious, his motivation is for his motherless children, thus casting a slightly sympathetic light on his otherwise cruel character. He says, "Even money-lenders backs, well, a man like me, can have a little or what you call feeling…"

Krogstad has his motives, the main being concern that his children are saved from hardship that comes with losing a job and reputation. He has suffered social stigma for a relatively minor crime, and was abandoned by the woman he loved. Sympathy for him comes when he is shown as wronged and a victim of circumstances.

Near the beginning of Act Three, Krogstad has an earnest **conversation with his lost love, the widow Mrs. Linde. They reconcile, and once their romance is reignited**, Krogstad **no longer wants to deal with blackmail** and extortion. He asks Mrs.Linde if he should tear up the revealing letter that was intended for Torvald's eyes. Surprisingly, Mrs.Linde decides that he should leave it in the mailbox so that Nora and Torvald can finally have an honest discussion about things. He agrees to this, but minutes later he chooses to drop off **a second letter explaining that their secret is safe and that the IOU is theirs to dispose.**

Krogstad occasionally lets his compassion shine through his bitterness. Playwright Henrik Ibsen provides enough hints in the first two acts to convince us that all Krogstad really needed was someone like Mrs. Linde to love and admire him for him to change from the position of an adversary or hostility.

Question 8

Narrate the confrontation of Mrs. Linde and Krogstad in Act III of the play. What, in your opinion, is the significance of this confrontation in the play? **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

The first part of the question was answered fairly well and included textual knowledge. The significance was left incomplete, as for instance, the key point about Mrs. Linde being a foil to Nora and adopting a different path to self-fulfilment.

Lack of use of quotes was observed in many answers.

Suggestions for teachers

- Ensure that students have a detailed knowledge of the text developed by discussion of impact of incidents, characters and relationships. Layers of interpretation and impact on plot development must be brought out. They should aim to develop analytical skills and their application to questions.
- Use of quotes must be encouraged. Accuracy and relevance to analysis must be reinforced.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 8.

It is the night of the party and dance music can be heard from upstairs. Nora and Torvald are at the party and **Mrs Linde sits alone** in their apartment, waiting for someone. **Krogstad arrives**; it is he whom she was expecting. **He reproaches** Mrs. Linde for jilting him, but she says she had no choice; **she had family to support and he was poor**. She tells him that only today did **she discover that it is his job that she is due to take**. He asks her if she will give it back to him, but she says this would not benefit him. **She needs someone to look after, and suggests that they get back together**. He cannot believe that she can overlook his past life, but she has faith in his essential goodness and believes his previous claim that he would be a better man if he were with her.

He is delighted. He realises that she knows what steps he has taken with the Helmers, and **suggests that he ask for his letter back**. But **Mrs. Linde insists that Torvald must know Nora's unhappy secret**. They must give up concealment and grow to a full understanding. **Krogstad leaves**. Mrs. Linde is overjoyed that at last she will have someone to care for.

Torvald enters, dragging Nora in with him.

Mrs. Linde is a foil (contrast) to Nora in that her route to self-fulfilment is the reverse of Nora's. Nora chooses to leave her family, but Mrs. Linde, who has led just such an independent life as the one Nora is embarking upon, decides to give it up to look after the man she loves and his children. Some critics have commented that Mrs. Linde's decision undermines Nora's and implies that Nora will come to regret her course of action. However, Ibsen does not suggest that Nora's action in leaving her family is the only route for a woman to find her true identity. The important thing is that Nora, having lived in a sham marriage, makes a conscious choice of independence, and that Mrs. Linde, having once given up the man she loved to support her relations, makes a conscious choice to look after him.

Both are being true to themselves after a period of denying their true natures.

In terms of the plot, **Krogstad mellows and shows a noble side to his nature** so it appears Nora will be saved. However, **the decision to let the truth be revealed, leads to the clash between Torvald and Nora, Nora's realisation of Torvald's hypocrisy and hollow vows, and her decision to leave him**.

Candidates can present any reasonable opinion on significance in terms of plot, character and theme but it must emerge from confrontation.

Question 9

Write short notes on the symbolism of: **[20]**

(a) The Christmas tree

(b) The Tarantella

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Comments of Examiners

In some cases, short note (a) was written on how a Christmas tree brings joy and happiness, with no parallel drawn to Nora or mention of the symbolic role of the tree. In others, where the decorative aspect was addressed, the tree becoming decrepit was not considered. Nora's psychological condition, the situation at the Helmer household and the state of Nora's marriage not brought out.

For short note (b), many wrote a description of the dance and perhaps Nora's persuading Torvald to watch her dance. Symbolism was not addressed. The means of escape from repression and the connection to morality were some of the salient points missing in the answers of many candidates.

Suggestions for teachers

- Teach importance literary concepts, of which symbolism is one. Classroom teaching could involve clues to help students arrive at the concept and use of symbolism by themselves so as to be able to recognise it independently.
- All parallels / levels of symbols to be discerned, not just the most obvious one.
- Short notes can also have quotes, albeit at fewer points than a long answer.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 9.

(a) The Christmas tree

The Christmas Tree, a festive object meant to serve a decorative purpose. It **symbolises Nora's position in her household as a plaything who is pleasing to look at**. It adds charm to the home.

Parallels can be drawn between Nora and the Christmas tree in the play: Just as **Nora instructs the maid that the children cannot see the tree until it has been decorated, she tells Torvald that no one can see her in her dress until the evening of the dance**. In the beginning of the second act, **after Nora's psychological condition has begun to erode, the stage directions indicate that the Christmas tree is correspondingly "dishevelled."**

In Norway, Christmas is an important family celebration, but the focus of the festivities and the opening of presents occur on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day is something of an anti-climax.

At the beginning of the play on Christmas Eve, Nora still believes her marriage to be happy. We see her ordering the Christmas tree to be brought in and insisting that it is hidden until she has decorated it. Symbolically, **this alerts us to the fact that there are hidden aspects to life in this household, that a carefully created appearance is what matters, and that Nora is the keeper of appearances**.

Significantly, when she is trying to **wheedle Torvald into keeping Krogstad in his job, she draws his attention to how pretty the flowers on the tree look**.

By Christmas Day, **the tree is stripped of its ornaments and its candles have burnt out (a link with the symbol of light).**

By this point, Torvald has refused to keep Krogstad in his job and Nora feels sure that Krogstad will reveal all to him. The carefully maintained appearance of the happy marriage is disintegrating under the encroachment of truth.

(b) The Tarantella:

The Tarantella **was a wild southern Italian dance**, generally danced by a couple or line of couples. The dance was named after the tarantula spider, whose poisonous bite was mistakenly believed to cause 'tarantism', an uncontrollable urge for wild dancing. The 'cure' prescribed by doctors was for the sufferer to dance to exhaustion.

Modern psychologists speculate that the true cause of the disorder, which achieved its highest profile in the nineteenth century and which involved **symptoms of what would not be called hysteria, was not the spider's bite but the repressed morals of that age. The only outlet for passionate self-expression, they reason, was the Tarantella.**

In this light, it is significant that **Torvald tells Nora to practice the Tarantella while he shuts himself away in his office**:

"I shall hear nothing; you can make as much noise as you please".

While Torvald is ostensibly being indulgent towards his wife, the image of her practising this passionate dance alone and unheard emphasizes **her isolation within her marriage.**

She persuades him to **watch her practise the dance in order to prevent him opening Krogstad's letter.** He tries to rein in her wildness with his instructions, but **she ignores his comments and dances ever more wildly**, her hair coming loose.

The mythology of tarantism suggests that she is dancing in order to rid herself of a deadly poison. Depending on how we wish to interpret this symbolism, **the poison may be the threat posed by Krogstad's revelations, or the poison of deception and hypocrisy that characterizes the Helmer marriage.**

DEATH OF A SALESMAN – *Arthur Miller*

Question 10

With close reference to the dialogue between Willy and Howard in Act II, bring out your assessment of his subservient relationship with his boss and its significance to the play. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

Candidates with strong textual knowledge could answer the narrative part of the question well. Details of dialogues were also vividly given, although in some centres minute details such as Willy picking up the lighter, collapsing and accidentally turning on the recorder were omitted. The assessment of the subservient relationship was also done well by some candidates; some missed the patronising air. However, the significance of this to the play was not brought out very clearly by many candidates. Few candidates mentioned the crucial fact of Willy's looking to the past while Howard was the face of things as they were to be.

Suggestions for teachers

- Use classes to discuss impact and significance of scenes in depth.
- Quotes, although used by some in this answer, can be used with greater effect.
- Narrative sequence in such questions must be reinforced, including seemingly minor actions. Once analysis is discussed, the relevance of every detail is reinforced.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 10.

The second act begins with a change in tone from the previous act, as Willy is now cheerful and optimistic and speaks to Linda about buying a new house in the country; he now believes that after seeing Howard he will have his job permanently in New York City.

Howard Wagner is Willy's boss. Howard inherited the company from his father, whom Willy regarded as a "masterful man" and "a prince." Though much younger than Willy, Howard treats Willy with condescension and eventually fires him.

Willy goes to the office with **intention of asking Howard for a New York position; however, Howard makes this difficult**. As soon as Willy walks into Howard's office he ignores Willy's attempt of discussing his career with him. Many a time Willy asks Howard a question and he simply ignores it or changes the subject. Howard seems to be **fascinated with his new wire recorder**. The only questions that Howard answers are about the recorder. "What's that, Howard?" "Didn't you ever see one of these? Wire recorder." After this Willy tries to ignore the recorder, "Oh can we talk a minute?" After this Howard continues to be preoccupied with his new gadget. He does not show Willy even common courtesy.

Howard, still obsessing over the machine then turns it on to let Willy hear his children. Instead of expressing irritation, **Willy does his best to remain calm as he is desperate for Howard to hear him out. After the recording stops, Howard starts to interrupt Willy mid-sentence.**

Howard is a very self-indulgent man who is very materialistic. **He patronises Willy slightly, "Don't you have a radio in the car?"** He says this in a sense that everyone must have a radio. Willy finally gets his say, but only when **he mentions the Christmas party where Howard had promised to give Willy an in-town job if there were any ever available. "Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember. Well, I couldn't think of anything for you Willy." After Willy hears this he panics, the tables now turn and Willy interrupts Howard mid-sentence. Willy starts to show emotion,** "God knows Howard; I never asked a favour of any man. But I was with the firm when your father used to carry you here in his arms." Willy is asking for some kind of respect for that.

Willy shows how desperate he is, picking Howard's lighter up for him. **Willy's anger** is also starts to show. Howard is being patronising again, he calls Willy "kid," feeling sorry for him. In complete desperation to convince Howard to change his mind, **Willy resorts to old memories of his successful days working for Howard's father**. Willy attempts to explain why he became a salesman. **He describes Dave Singleman**, a well-respected salesman who made a lasting impression on society when he died. He describes Dave Singleman to be a man who was "remembered and loved and helped by so many different people." When he died, "he died the death of a salesman."

There is certainly a connection between Dave Singleman and Willy Loman. Willy told Howard that "hundreds of salesman and buyers were at his funeral." This of course was a lie, no one came, and Dave Singleman was to always be a single man.

Howard, now feeling he has heard enough, tries to end their meeting; however, Willy is now angry. "**You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away- a man is not a piece of fruit!" In the course of the dialogue, Willy's desperation shows as he keeps reducing his demand for salary**.

Willy is now angry with himself for getting angry at Howard; **he speaks to Howard's father, Frank. Willy is devastated; he collapses and accidentally turns on the screaming noise of Howard's children on the recorder which drives Willy crazy**. When Howard comes back in to see what the fuss is about, he lets Willy know that he no longer wants him for the firm.

Howard realises Willy's false pride, as he is still lying, saying how great his sons are, "There working on a very big deal." Howard is so fed up by the end, he wants Willy gone and continues to patronise him, telling him, "pull yourself together." This scene is where **Willy's misplaced values and delusions come to a head, and he is left in a state of incredulous collapse**.

In this second act, Arthur Miller uses **Howard as a symbol of the future**. Howard's office emphasizes the technology of the future. Howard is more interested in the future, not the past. **In contrast, Willy speaks not of his future with the company but with his history and past promises**. The recorder symbolizes how Willy is not right for the modern business world. Even his values belong in the past.

Despite being much younger than Willy, Howard patronizes Willy by repeatedly calling him "kid." Willy proves entirely subservient to Howard, as evidenced by the fact that he picks up Howard's lighter and hands it to him, unable to follow his own advice about such office boy jobs. Willy's repeated reminders to Howard that he helped his father name Howard illustrate his psychological reliance on outmoded and insubstantial concepts of chivalry and nobility incompatible with the reality of the modern business world.

(any other assessment that addresses question and has justification can be accepted and credit given for critical thinking)

Question 11

Comment on the title of Arthur Miller's play ***-Death of a Salesman***. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

This was a challenging question requiring a broad perspective of play. It covered physical death, death of the American Dream, Willy's failures, insurance, idealised funeral and the real one, Willy's collapse. Not all points were covered by many candidates. In many cases, the answers were general explanations without reference to the text for substantiation. Without substantiation and with only limited perspective, many points were repeated in answers. Many answers may have had the length but lacked the content.

Suggestions for teachers

- Develop in students the skill to coordinate points from across the play, so that all threads of a wider aspect are known. Students must be taught to look beyond the obvious.
- Textual reference to support opinion is a must. This includes quotes.
- Students must plan and revise answers to ensure flow, structure and clarity. There is no need to repeat points. Written practice and proper correction can help.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 11.

The title has several layers of meaning. The most blatantly obvious one is that it refers to Willy Loman's **actual physical death** – unfortunately by **suicide**.

It also refers to Willy's **idealized way of dying**; he wants a massive funeral with everyone weeping and beating their chests and so forth. **Willy models this dream funeral on the service held for an old salesman, Dave Singleman**.

Singleman's funeral is in fact part of what inspired Willy to become a salesman in the first place. Willy says that it was huge and well attended, making it totally obvious to all that Singleman was successful and well liked. Unfortunately for Willy, his funeral is nothing like the way he describes; had he seen it, he would be totally devastated. By Willy's own standards, **his funeral shows that he wasn't very successful and wasn't particularly liked. The gap between how Willy dreams that his death will be received and how it actually goes down makes this title sadly ironic**.

The title also refers to the **death of Willy's salesman dream – the dream to be financially successful and a father to successful sons. By the end of the play, Willy is bankrupt and without a job.** Willy hopes, though, that by killing himself **he can leave some legacy to his son Biff in the form of life insurance money.** This would give Biff a chance to succeed in the business world. Actually, that doesn't happen at all. In the funeral scene, it's more than clear that **all Willy's dreams are dead. Biff has no interest in following in his father's footsteps**. Also, it's painfully obvious to everybody that Willy committed suicide, meaning there will be **no life insurance money coming to his family**. In the end, Willy's salesman dream is dead.

The title also indicates figurative death: **Willy's mental collapse before his actual death**. His exhaustion and mental wanderings are clear from the moment he enters. He keeps moving to the past, re-living it at moments of anxiety. His collapse climaxes at the restaurant where he is left a gibbering idiot by his sons. **His delusions and failure as a salesman, husband, father and provider hasten this 'death'**.

On a larger level, the title could be taking yet another swipe at capitalists and the American Dream. Willy, being a salesman, in many ways represents American commercialism. **The fact that he gets destroyed by the system may be a comment on the soullessness of the system itself**.

(Quotes and textual reference as appropriate)

Question 12

Discuss Biff as a character who is compelled to seek the truth about himself, unlike his father Willy. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

Many candidates performed well in this question. While a number of candidates analysed Biff and contrasted him to Willy, some stopped at Biff ignoring the latter half of question.

Suggestions for teachers

- Study of character – traits, growth or change and role in play can help.
- Students must be asked to ensure that they address the complete question.
- Discourage students from studying from free websites and summaries / guides. The analysis is too superficial or incomplete and often without textual reference. Further, word by word similarity across centres makes lack of original thought obvious.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 12.

Biff is a catalyst. He drives Willy's actions and thoughts, particularly his memories, throughout the play. **Whenever Willy is unable to accept the present, he retreats to the past, and Biff is usually there**. Prior to his Boston trip, **Biff adored Willy. He believed his father's stories and accepted his father's philosophy that a person will be successful, provided that he is "well-liked." Biff never questioned Willy, even when it was obvious that Willy was breaking the rules. As a result, Biff grew up believing that he was not bound by social rules or expectations because Willy did not have to abide by them, nor did Willy expect Biff to. It is not surprising that Biff's penchant for stealing continued throughout his adult life** because Willy encouraged Biff's "little thefts" while he was growing up. For example, instead of disciplining Biff for stealing the football, Willy praised his initiative.

Biff's perception of Willy as the ideal father is destroyed after **Biff's trip to Boston. Once he learns that Willy is having an affair, Biff rejects Willy and his philosophy**. Biff considers Willy to be a "fake," and he no longer believes in, or goes along with, Willy's grand fantasies of success. Instead, Biff despises his father and everything he represents.

Biff's problem lies in the fact that, even though he does not want to associate with Willy, he cannot change the fact that he is his son. And as a result, he cannot change the fact that his father has inevitably affected him. It is true that Biff is not a womanizer like his brother Happy, but **he has incorporated Willy's tendency to exaggerate and manipulate reality in his favour.** For example, Biff truly believes he was a salesman for Oliver, rather than a shipping clerk. It is only when he confronts Oliver that Biff realises how wrong he was.

Biff is different from Willy because he does finally accept and embrace the fact that he has been living a lie all of his life. Biff is relieved once he realizes who he is and what he wants, as opposed to who Willy thinks he should be and who Biff needs to pretend to be in order to please him. Once Biff states that "We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house," he severs himself from Willy

because he openly refuses to live by Willy's philosophy any longer. Ironically, Biff reconciles with Willy almost immediately following this statement. Since he acknowledges that he, too, is a "fake," Biff can no longer hold a grudge against Willy.

Biff and Happy are richly drawn characters; one realizes who he is and the other is lost, following in the footsteps of his father.

At the conclusion of the play, Happy is extremely angry at Biff because **Biff said that Willy "didn't know who he was." It is at this very moment in the play that Biff realises who he is; he has achieved a truth about himself--"I know who I am, kid"**--he has the right to express the truth about Willy.

Happy, on the other hand, is still like his father and will likely follow in Willy's footsteps. Happy cannot admit that Willy's dreams were "all, all, wrong."

Biff has certainly won the right to say that and is believable when he says that. Happy is still the one living in a dreamlike fantasy world and will never grow out of it. That's what makes Happy sad, almost tragic-like, and Biff, heroic. **Biff finally can admit to himself who he is and finally change for the better.**

Unlike Willy and Happy, Biff feels compelled to seek the truth about himself. While his father and brother are unable to accept the miserable reality of their respective lives, **Biff acknowledges his failure and eventually manages to confront it.** Even the difference between his name and theirs reflects this polarity: whereas Willy and Happy wilfully and happily delude themselves, **Biff bristles stiffly at self-deception**. Biff's discovery that Willy has a mistress strips him of his faith in Willy and Willy's ambitions for him. Consequently, Willy sees Biff as an underachiever, while Biff sees himself as trapped in Willy's grandiose fantasies. After his epiphany in Bill Oliver's office, Biff determines to break through the lies surrounding the Loman family in order to come to realistic terms with his own life. Intent on revealing the simple and humble truth behind Willy's fantasy, Biff longs for the territory (the symbolically free West) obscured by his father's blind faith in a skewed, materialist version of the American Dream.

NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY VERSE –*Edited by Chris Woodhead*

Question 13

Comment on the imagery and theme of ***The Ship of Death*** by D.H. Lawrence. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

Many candidates did a paraphrase of the poem and dealt with the theme only as death and preparing for it. The attempt was a mere summary of the poem and no specific discussion of images and their effect and themes.

In some cases, images were more thoroughly presented, although the focus was on the major, visual ones with the other sensory images such as the smell of ashes and the palpable fear of the soul omitted. Themes were mentioned but inadequately substantiated by some candidates.

Suggestions for teachers

- The poem must be taught with any literary devices or concepts involved, in this case, imagery. Themes must be elaborated upon as they emerge in the teaching. Mere explanation of lines and the most obvious interpretation is insufficient.
- Analysis (themes) must be backed by reference to text and quotes.
- Answers must be framed to address the focus of the question. Teachers must give a variety of questions on the same writer / poem to check if the answers are framed appropriately. A general summary or overview for all is not enough.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 13.

This poem is a part of Lawrence's great collection, Last Poems, released posthumously. It indicates that he did develop certain intense convictions about death. Dying of tuberculosis at age 35, Lawrence wrote this. It is considered to be one of the greatest meditations on death in the 20th century. In April 1927, **Lawrence explored Etruscan Tombs in Haly and wrote how he saw the "little bronze ship of death" in one of them**.

In "The Ship of Death", Lawrence wrestles with the **preparations he must make for his own imminent demise.**

He begins by relating his own decay to that of the **autumnal world** surrounding him. "The **apples** falling like great drops of dew / To bruise themselves an exit from themselves".

He recognizes that it is time to "find an **exit** from the fallen self", and considers how this should be done.

He **rejects suicide**, alluding to Hamlet:

"With daggers, bodkins, bullets, man can make / a bruise or break of exit for his life / But is that a quietus, O tell me, is it quietus?"

Lawrence responds with the great exhortation, "Build then the **ship of death**, for you must take / the longest **journey, to oblivion**."

Lawrence provides a shadowy but suggestive intimation of the Beyond. Sensing his own disintegration, he imagines his entire body and mind receding completely into oblivion – before a strange resurrection at the end.

In the end, he sees to the **other side of oblivion**, to a new life:

"Wait, wait! Even so, a flush of yellow / and strangely, O chilled wan soul, a flush of rose. / A flush of rose, and the whole thing starts again…./ The flood subsides, and the body, like a worn sea-shell /

emerges strange and lovely.

(Candidates should be able to bring out the theme of painful and slow death, death and after, and new life or re-birth. Preparing for death should be a part of the explanation. Images created: apples, smell of ashes, ship and provision, silence and darkness of voyage, dawn, body as shell, soul as frightened person, death as rising flood.)

Question 14

As the Team's Head Brass is an account by Edward Thomas of the effects of war on the simple routine of everyday lives. Comment. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

Very few candidates attempted this question. Candidates with an in depth textual knowledge could do justice to this question since it demanded a detailed narration of the poem (the dialogue). Not many candidates, however, referred to the poet's own involvement in the war and the context of the poem which is linked to bringing out the effects of war asked about. The question hints at a discussion of this poem as a war poem.

Analysis of how the effect of war is brought out was insufficient. Hardly any literary terms were used.

Suggestions for teachers

- Teachers should be able to place poems in context of the poet's life and circumstances, especially when these have a direct bearing on his work. Students could be asked to research and try and find connections on their own to enhance critical thinking by placing poems in socio-political or biographical contexts.
- A poem has more aspects to it than just the obvious line by line explanation. Layers of interpretation and connections have to discovered by students.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 14.

Edward Thomas's wrote his poetry before he embarked for the Front in late January 1917. As opposed to the recording of the horrors of war from first-hand experience, Thomas writes of the effects of the First World War upon those whose routines at home continued away from the heat of actual battle. *As the Team's Head Brass* was written on May 27, 1916, an account of what Thomas saw of the countryside that he so loved walking in. The ominous shadow of war is brought out through the description of its disruptive impact on the peaceful lives in the English countryside.

On the persuasion of good friend Robert Frost, Thomas began writing poetry later on in his literary career that began with prose writing primarily to earn income. His frustration at being no better than a hack and his temperament made him susceptible to melancholy, depression and even suicidal thoughts, much to his wife Helen's fear. When the war began, he was still recording every moment and observation in note books for prose pieces, some of which he re-wrote as poems. **Having enlisted with the Artists' Rifles in July 1915 Thomas was based at High Beech in Essex before being moved to Hare Hall camp where he acted as a map-reading instructor. *As the Team's Head Brass* was composed a few weeks before he applied for a commission in the Royal Artillery** at a stage in decision-making about war. Acceptance into it would lead him to France in the early months of the following year and his death in April 1917 in the Battle of Arras.

He wrote to Helen that he set out from Hare Hall camp on a long walk and sat down at an inn and in fields, passed the same pair of lovers three or four times, and wrote some lines them and re-wrote them. He composed this poem using enjambment and iambic pentameter, echoing the rhythmic movement of the plough across the field of charlock, interspersing the **dialogue** between the ploughman and the poet-soldier. This dialogue, deceptively casual, conveys Edward Thomas's reflections on the war and his love for his native countryside. When asked why he had enlisted, it is said he picked up a pinch of earth and said, "Literally, for this." The jagged line turns themselves indicate the intrusion of the war into the pastoral.

Instead of ignoring the **newcomer settled on the branch of a fallen elm**, the **farmer would lean across the handle and talk to him** as the plough turned at the end. It began as a desultory conversation **about the weather**, and then **moved on to the war**. The ploughman informed the poet that the elm on whose boughs he sat perched had been felled by a **blizzard**. When asked when it would be taken away, he replied, **"When the war's over."** The conversation thus veered to the war. **Talk would last a minute and have an interval of ten** as the plough went across and returned to this end of the field. The interested question **"Have you been out?"** was followed by a comment **on the soldier perhaps not wanting to go. The poet replied he would not mind if he returned: he would not mind losing an arm, would hate to lose a leg and, in a show of dry humour, said if he lost his head, he "should want nothing more".** The talk then shifted to the losses, that area of the country **having lost "a good few" men,** including the ploughman's mate who died on his second day in France.

There is a tone of wistfulness as the ploughman said the **tree would have been moved had his mate been there.** Then, they discussed how **things would have been different** and the opportunity for the soldier to sit there would not have been there:

> Everything
> Would have been different. For it would have been
> Another world.

The suggestion that it might have been a "better" world is quickly dispensed with. At that moment the lovers who had disappeared into the woods earlier emerged, and the poem ends on the note of continuity as the ploughman and his stumbling team return to their task.

While there is no direct reference to the brutality of war, **the violence is brought out** in the farmer's revelation that his area has lost many men, including the "mate" who died soon after he joined the fighting in France. War is indifferent and futile and it leaves a void, which is apparent, since "Only two teams work on the farm this year" and the elm has been left there for there is no one to help remove it. Thomas uses his **love for and observation of nature** to show how the **peaceful life of the English countryside has been disrupted** by the war in Europe. **The elm, itself a symbol of destruction and tellingly felled by a "blizzard", signifying the tumult and storm of killing** miles away, still lies there serving as a reminder of the harsh truth. Thomas steers clear of denouncing the war-torn world and does not develop the idea of the world being "better" without it, possibly because it may be seen as a blasphemy against the scheme of an all-powerful Creator. Hence,

> though
> If we could see all all might seem good.

Without there being a judgement on good or bad, the notion of the world being "different" is clear.

The poem does not end on the desultoriness with which it begins. **The fresh clods of earth turned up by the plough, the act of ploughing itself and the young lovers who emerge from the woods just as the discussion has turned to the world being affected by war all signify hope of a new life and**

beginning, regeneration and strength to survive the threat to the life as known till then.

Question 15

Analyse W.H. Auden's ***The Unknown Citizen*** as a socio-political statement. **[20]**

Comments of Examiners

Many attempted this well, including textual detail and quotes in answers.

While most analyses were well brought out, many omitted to discuss the poem as a critical comment on American Capitalism, instead stopping at the totalitarian state. This proved a major gap in comprehension since it indicated that the clues in the poem (Fudge Motors Inc and instalments on refrigerator) had been overlooked.

In a few cases, the answer turned out to be a general critical essay on how technology has taken over modern life.

Suggestions for teachers

- The poem has to be carefully taught keeping awareness of the poet's life and beliefs in mind. Incomplete teaching is a disadvantage to students.
- Reliance on free websites must be avoided. Regurgitating them without comprehension of poem and question needs to be discouraged.

MARKING SCHEME

Question 15.

In a mild satirical tone, Auden is critiquing the state's determination to define the meaning of a citizen's life in just a few facts collected by technology. He is suggesting that much more important information about a human life is left uncollected and, therefore, unconsidered by the state and society. The result of this accumulation of facts is an incomplete picture. These statistics do not get to the essence of the man.

That there was a time when individuals were known by their names rather than by their social security numbers seems almost incomprehensible. **Neither Auden nor the reader has any sense of who this modern man is. He is truly unknown to both poet and reader.** Auden wrote this twenty-nine line poem about the **nameless, middle-class man in the middle of the twentieth century.**.

The poem is a dark **satire** about what can possibly happen if political and bureaucratic principles corrode the creative and revolutionary spirit of the individual. The poem was also titled after "tombs of the unknown soldiers", tombs that were used to represent soldiers who were impossible to identify since the end of World War I. **Auden wrote the poem shortly after becoming a citizen of the United States. He came to the U. S. to escape what he thought was the repressive nature of Britain.** Before arriving in the States, Auden left his hometown of Britain for the country Berlin. He said that it was there that he first experienced the social and political problems that later became a centre-piece for the majority of the themes of his poetry. After staying in Berlin, he temporarily moved to Spain where he had a job broadcasting propaganda. This experience made him feel even more morally ambiguous regarding his typically far-left viewpoints. **His background suggests that he provides the character of the "Unknown Citizen" as a symbol for many of the people who mythically come to America to be free, but are later surprised when they learn that capitalism and bureaucracy have been ineffective systems that enslaved people in greater ways than the dominance of the status quo might affect issues related to human independence**. The "Unknown Citizen" is given a reference to be identified by in the beginning epigram of the poem, **but the point of reference is not a human name but a number. The epigram reads, "To JS/07/M/378, this Marble Monument is erected by**

the State." This is a striking metaphor for the individual being reduced down to a number. Upon the first read it is difficult to realise the absolute significance of that combination of letters and numbers. There's not even a point of reference about whom that identification number belongs to. However, on closer readings it becomes evident that in this instance the number is part of a slight rhyming scheme that gracefully sets up the rhythm and meter that follows throughout the stanza that encompasses the majority of the poem. The only part of the poem that deviates from that **one stanza is the question that concludes the poem. In this sense the poem reads almost like an obituary**, especially with its down-to-earth and conversational rhythm and rhyming scheme.

The protagonist is represented as being a very dull and pitiful person. He's portrayed as someone **who doesn't take risks such as disobedience or holding his own opinions. Auden writes in one line that "his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way**". Also the main character has served in a recent war from around the time that the poem is set in, but ends up making ends meet by being employed at an automotive factory. **The factory is called "Fudge Motors, Inc." in the poem.** The pun on the brand name of a car factory shows even more of Auden's attitudes towards capitalism, its treatment of the downtrodden blue-collar worker, and **capitalism's reduction of the working-class into nullified labourers with less capability for having attitudes or opinions of their own. The poem says, "He held the proper opinions for the time of year."**

He also is compared to "the modern man" in that he has a phonograph, a car, a radio, and a Frigidaire just like many other people around him do, but he does not have much of any possessions to call his own. As was the norm at the time, he was aware of the "Instalment Plan".

He was no burden on the social security system, since his **insurance** was paid and his **health card** revealed that he was hospitalised once and he left "cured". He complied with the Eugenist ideal of adding **five children** to the population. He did not "interfere" with their education, accepting whatever was provided by the 'system'.

The main character of the poem appears to be trying his best to **conform.** It appears as if the main character of the poem actually is not happy. He spends his entire life trying to find approval but he doesn't look inward to himself for his own opinions and solutions. The biting question at the end that the poet asks:

> Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
>
> Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

The poet's tone is satiric and **ironic**, as he paints a picture of a non-descript, unintelligible member of a legion of such conformists. This is Auden's comment on the Capitalist society that he found in America.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

(a) Topics found difficult by candidates in the Question paper:

- Those demanding minute and accurate detail from text
- Those relating to specifics, either of narration or event – the focus was not clear and answers were general therefore irrelevant since detail of the part asked about was incomplete or superficial
- Those that involved keeping a track of events or character spread over chapters, particularly if not in chronological sequence. Character analysis suffered.
- Those that involved analysis and discussion of title – literal and figurative. In depth analytical skill needs to be polished.
- Those requiring understanding of symbolism, imagery and theme.
- Those demanding context of literary work whether in terms of indirect impact or by way of direct question on history and myth.

(b) Concepts between which candidates got confused:

- Specific incident and general events leading to that incident
- Characters in literary text in the context of plot (narration of sequence of events / action) and role in terms of theme: candidates found it difficult to analyse role of characters and relied on narrating their actions.
- Title of novel: To Kill a Mockingbird (mockingbird and mocking).
- Death of a Salesman – literal death and metaphorical death.
- A Doll's House – narration / description of Christmas tree and Tarantella and their symbolism.
- Poetry – Images and themes versus general explanation of poem.

(c) Suggestions for candidates:

- Every incident or event in a prose or drama text is intrinsic to 'story' – its narrative and other detail, **sequence and accurate description must be learnt as also an understanding developed of what makes that event significant**. Students should try and link the event to plot, theme and character.
- Characters have to be studied in terms of what they do literally in novel or drama and what they stand for. **All character-based questions should consist of a study of the character in terms of his or her personality traits supported by what he or she does or thinks in the novel to bring those out, and the role that character plays** whether in bringing out theme or other characters. Any **change in the character** must be traced. The weightage to each depends on how the question is phrased.
- The skill to **track threads of plot (action and character) spread across chapters** and not always in chronological sequence must be developed. Several novels have narration of simultaneously occurring events in each chapter, or incidents that move back and forth in time. The whole has to be understood from such seeming fragments.

- **Strategic placing of accurate quotes** from the texts is necessary. General overviews without in depth textual knowledge are to be avoided. Evidence of thorough study of text is appropriate use of quotes, whether lines, words or phrases; choice and technicalities of quoting are necessary to a study of English Literature. Students should be able to identify textual detail, including accurate quotes that will **support an opinion or analysis**.
- Gaining knowledge about the literary text's background and its writer's circumstances helps in understanding the text better as a direct product of or protest against its context. Students should look for **relevant biographical detail as well as social, political, religious and artistic factors**.
- Regular and frequent written practice is essential. Learning to **recognise demands of the question** is equally vital. Different questions on the same poem or aspect of play or novel can be answered to understand how to structure and frame answers. All parts of the question need to be addressed. Regular practice will also ensure **time management** improves so that the candidate can do justice to all five questions in the given three hours.
- Long, irrelevant introduction and conclusion take away from the main point of the answer. Candidates should learn to write **suitable introductions and conclusions** that link answer to question but do not take reader away into lengthy information that the reader is not looking for in that question.
- **Grammar, spelling and syntax** need to be polished for accuracy. Simple but correct language is always preferable to attempted complexities that are confused because of incorrect usage.