

# Analysis of Pupil Performance

ISC Year 2017  
Examination

Languages

ELECTIVE ENGLISH



*Research Development and Consultancy Division*

Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations  
New Delhi

**Year 2017**

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## FOREWORD

This document of the Analysis of Pupils' Performance at the ISC Year 12 and ICSE Year 10 Examination is one of its kind. It has grown and evolved over the years to provide feedback to schools in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in handling the examinations.

We commend the work of Mrs. Shilpi Gupta (Deputy Head) and the Research Development and Consultancy Division (RDCD) of the Council who have painstakingly prepared this analysis. We are grateful to the examiners who have contributed through their comments on the performance of the candidates under examination as well as for their suggestions to teachers and students for the effective transaction of the syllabus.

We hope the schools will find this document useful. We invite comments from schools on its utility and quality.

**November 2017**

**Gerry Arathoon  
Chief Executive & Secretary**

# PREFACE

The Council has been involved in the preparation of the ICSE and ISC Analysis of Pupil Performance documents since the year 1994. Over these years, these documents have facilitated the teaching-learning process by providing subject/ paper wise feedback to teachers regarding performance of students at the ICSE and ISC Examinations. With the aim of ensuring wider accessibility to all stakeholders, from the year 2014, the ICSE and the ISC documents have been made available on the Council's website [www.cisce.org](http://www.cisce.org).

The document includes a detailed qualitative analysis of the performance of students in different subjects which comprises of examiners' comments on common errors made by candidates, topics found difficult or confusing, marking scheme for each answer and suggestions for teachers/ candidates.

In addition to a detailed qualitative analysis, the Analysis of Pupil Performance documents for the Examination Year 2017 have a new component of a detailed quantitative analysis. For each subject dealt with in the document, both at the ICSE and the ISC levels, a detailed statistical analysis has been done, which has been presented in a simple user-friendly manner.

It is hoped that this document will not only enable teachers to understand how their students have performed with respect to other students who appeared for the ICSE/ISC Year 2017 Examinations, how they have performed within the Region or State, their performance as compared to other Regions or States, etc., it will also help develop a better understanding of the assessment/ evaluation process. This will help them in guiding their students more effectively and comprehensively so that students prepare for the ICSE/ ISC Examinations, with a better understanding of what is required from them.

The Analysis of Pupil Performance document for ICSE for the Examination Year 2017 covers the following subjects: English (English Language, Literature in English), Hindi, History, Civics and Geography (History & Civics, Geography), Mathematics, Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology), Commercial Studies, Economics, Computer Applications, Economics Applications, Commercial Applications.

Subjects covered in the ISC Analysis of Pupil Performance document for the Year 2017 include English (English Language and Literature in English), Hindi, Elective English, Physics (Theory and Practical), Chemistry (Theory and Practical), Biology (Theory and Practical), Mathematics, Computer Science, History, Political Science, Geography, Sociology, Psychology, Economics, Commerce, Accounts and Business Studies.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of all the ICSE and the ISC examiners who have been an integral part of this exercise, whose valuable inputs have helped put this document together.

I would also like to thank the RDCD team of Dr. Manika Sharma, Dr. M.K. Gandhi, Ms. Mansi Guleria and Mrs. Roshni George, who have done a commendable job in preparing this document. The statistical data pertaining to the ICSE and the ISC Year 2017 Examinations has been provided by the IT section of the Council for which I would like to thank Col. R. Sreejeth (Deputy Secretary - IT), Mr. M.R. Felix, Education Officer (IT) – ICSE and Mr. Samir Kumar, Education Officer (IT) - ISC.

**November 2017**

***Shilpi Gupta***  
**Deputy Head - RDCD**

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# INTRODUCTION

This document aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the performance of candidates in the subject. It comprises of two sections, which provide Quantitative and Qualitative analysis results in terms of performance of candidates in the subject for the ISC Year 2017 Examination. The details of the Quantitative and the Qualitative analysis are given below.

## Quantitative Analysis

This section provides a detailed statistical analysis of the following:

- Overall Performance of candidates in the subject (Statistics at a Glance)
- State wise Performance of Candidates
- Gender wise comparison of Overall Performance
- Region wise comparison of Performance
- Comparison of Region wise performance on the basis of Gender
- Comparison of performance in different Mark Ranges and comparison on the basis of Gender for the top and bottom ranges
- Comparison of performance in different Grade categories and comparison on the basis of Gender for the top and bottom grades

The data has been presented in the form of means, frequencies and bar graphs.

## Understanding the tables

Each of the comparison tables shows N (Number of candidates), Mean Marks obtained, Standard Errors and t-values with the level of significance. For t-test, mean values compared with their standard errors indicate whether an observed difference is likely to be a true difference or whether it has occurred by chance. The t-test has been applied using a confidence level of 95%, which means that if a difference is marked as 'statistically significant' (with \* mark, refer to t-value column of the table), the probability of the difference occurring by chance is less than 5%. In other words, we are 95% confident that the difference between the two values is true.

t-test has been used to observe significant differences in the performance of boys and girls, gender wise differences within regions (North, East, South and West), gender wise differences within marks ranges (Top and bottom ranges) and gender wise differences within grades awarded (Grade 1 and Grade 9) at the ISC Year 2017 Examination.

The analysed data has been depicted in a simple and user-friendly manner.

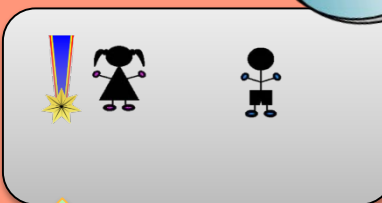
Given below is an example showing the comparison tables used in this section and the manner in which they should be interpreted.

**Comparison on the basis of Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	SE	t-value
Girls	2,538	66.1	0.29	11.91*
Boys	1,051	60.1	0.42	

\*Significant at 0.05 level

**Girls performed significantly better than boys.**



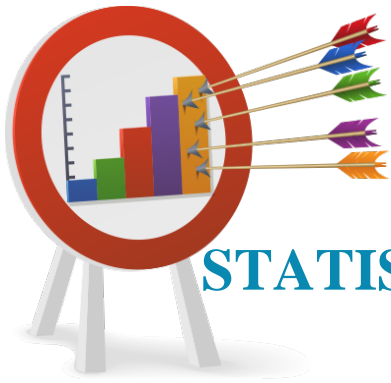
The results have also been depicted pictographically. In this case, the girls performed significantly better than the boys. This is depicted by the girl with a medal.

The table shows comparison between the performances of boys and girls in a particular subject. The t-value of 11.91 is significant at 0.05 level (mentioned below the table) with a mean of girls as 66.1 and that of boys as 60.1. It means that there is significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in the subject. The probability of this difference occurring by chance is less than 5%. The mean value of girls is higher than that of boys. It can be interpreted that girls are performing significantly better than boys.

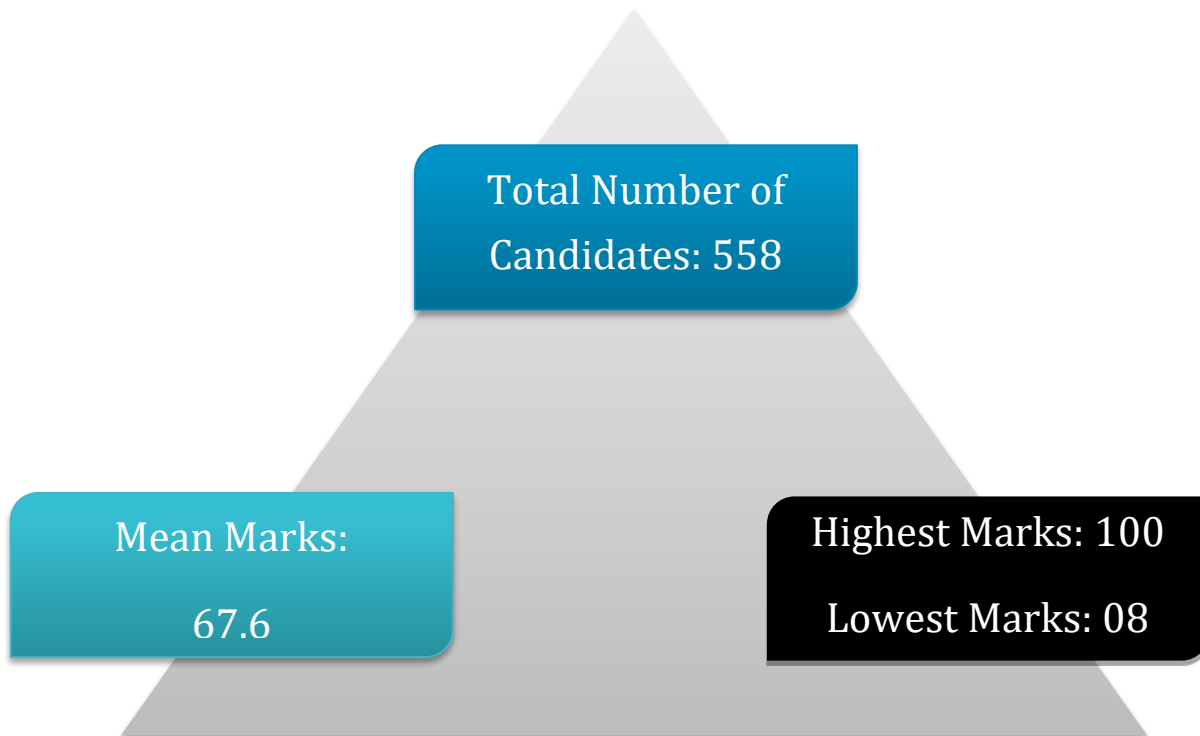
## Qualitative Analysis

The purpose of the qualitative analysis is to provide insights into how candidates have performed in individual questions set in the question paper. This section is based on inputs provided by examiners from examination centres across the country. It comprises of question wise feedback on the performance of candidates in the form of *Comments of Examiners* on the common errors made by candidates along with *Suggestions for Teachers* to rectify/ reduce these errors. The *Marking Scheme* for each question has also been provided to help teachers understand the criteria used for marking. Topics in the question paper that were generally found to be difficult or confusing by candidates, have also been listed down, along with general suggestions for candidates on how to prepare for the examination/ perform better in the examination.

# QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS



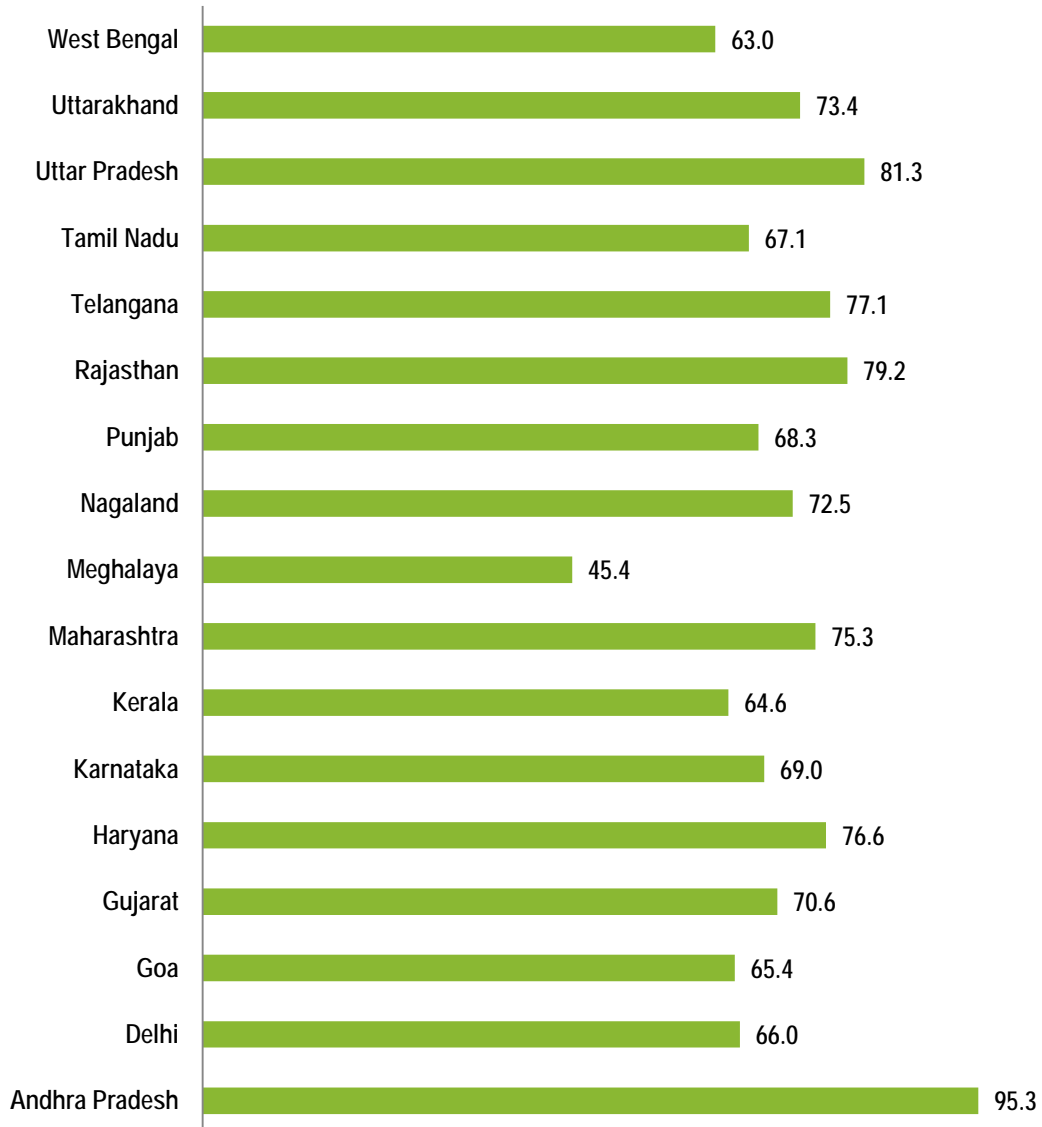
## STATISTICS AT A GLANCE



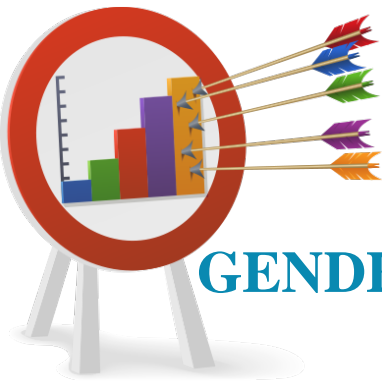




## PERFORMANCE (STATE-WISE)



**The State of Andhra Pradesh secured highest mean marks.**



## GENDER-WISE COMPARISON



### GIRLS

Mean Marks: 70.0

Number of  
Candidates: 436



### BOYS

Mean Marks: 58.9

Number of  
Candidates: 122

### Comparison on the basis of Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SE	t-value
Girls	436	70.0	0.74	6.37*
Boys	122	58.9	1.58	

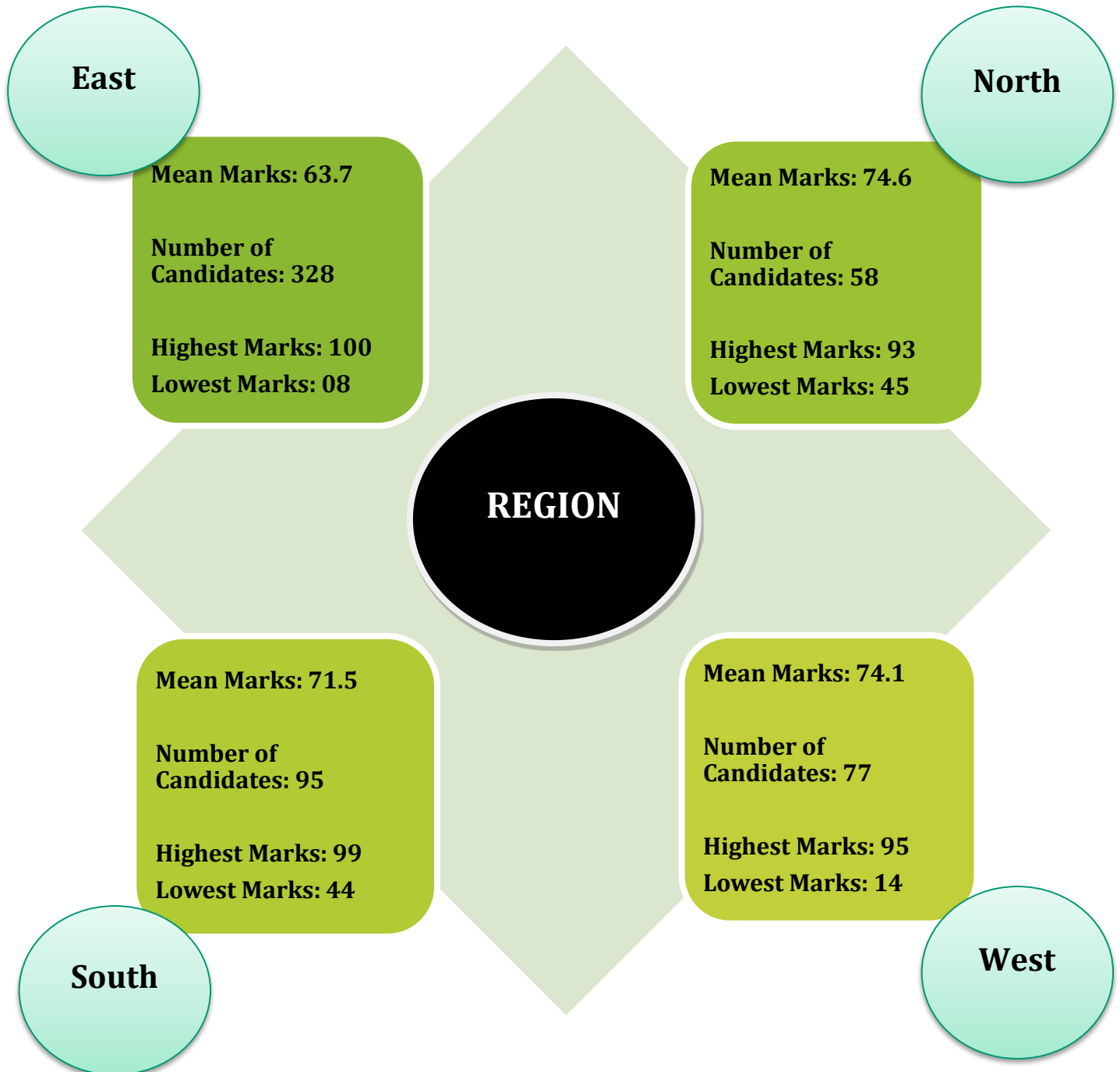
\*Significant at 0.05 level

**Girls performed  
significantly better than  
boys.**

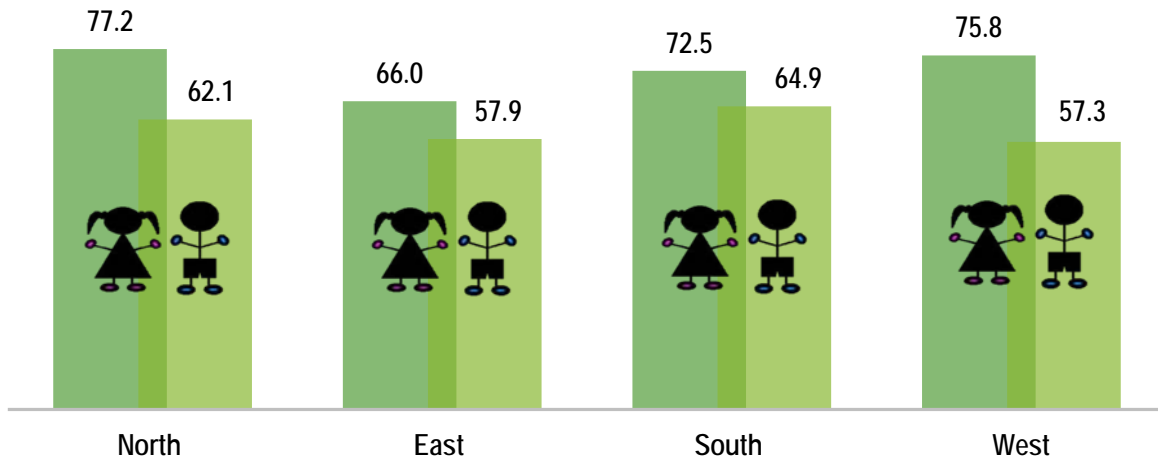




## REGION-WISE COMPARISON



## Mean Marks obtained by Boys and Girls-Region wise



### Comparison on the basis of Gender within Region

Region	Gender	N	Mean	SE	t-value
North (N)	Girls	48	77.2	1.62	3.39*
	Boys	10	62.1	4.15	
East (E)	Girls	235	66.0	1.07	3.83*
	Boys	93	57.9	1.82	
South (S)	Girls	83	72.5	1.43	1.52
	Boys	12	64.9	4.76	
West (W)	Girls	70	75.8	1.50	2.29*
	Boys	7	57.3	7.94	

\*Significant at 0.05 level

The performance of girls was significantly better than that of boys in the northern, eastern and western regions. In southern region no significant difference was observed.

#### REGION (N, E, W)





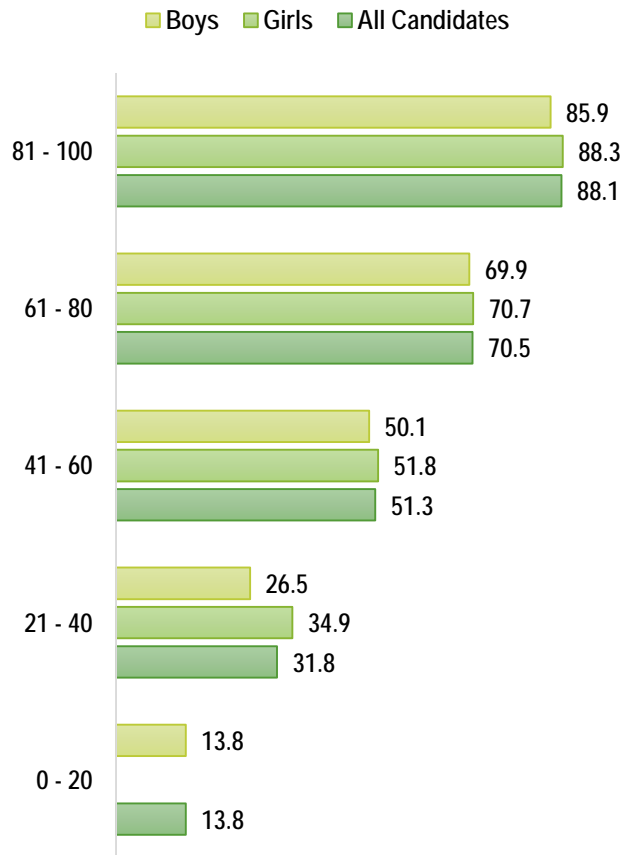
## MARK RANGES : COMPARISON GENDER-WISE

Comparison on the basis of gender in top and bottom mark ranges

Marks Range	Gender	N	Mean	SE	t-value
Top Range (81-100)	Girls	125	88.3	0.42	1.69
	Boys	14	85.9	1.36	
Bottom Range (0-20)	Girls	0	0	0	-
	Boys	5	13.8	1.75	

### Marks Range (81-100)

No significant difference was observed between the average performance of girls and boys in marks range (81-100).



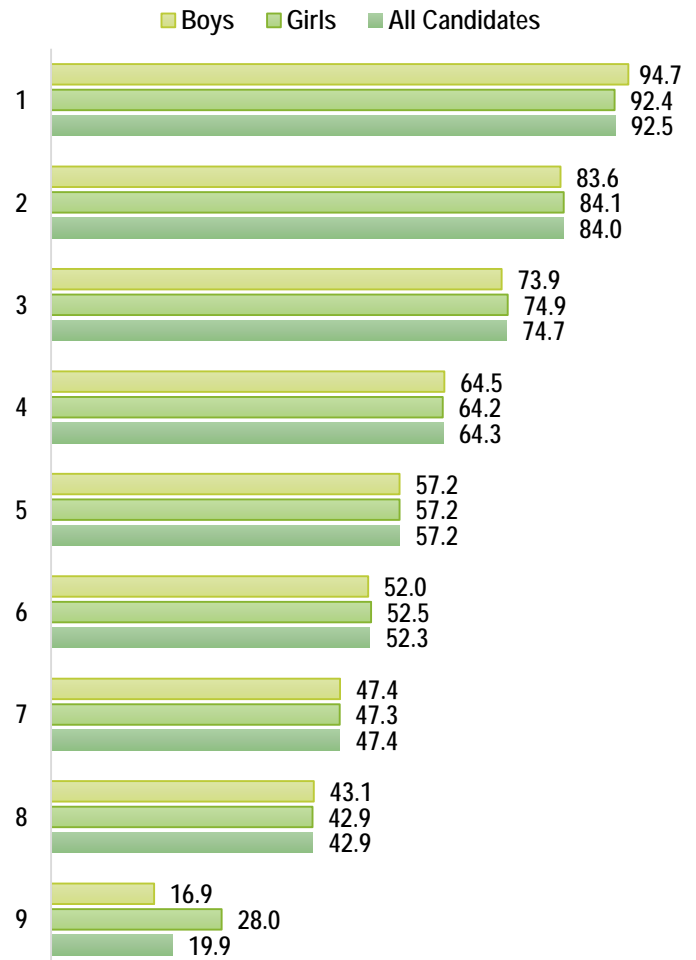


# GRADES AWARDED : COMPARISON GENDER-WISE

Comparison on the basis of gender in Grade 1 and Grade 9

Grades	Gender	N	Mean	SE	t-value
Grade 1	Girls	60	92.4	11.74	-0.06
	Boys	3	94.7	36.48	
Grade 9	Girls	3	28.0	11.05	0.90
	Boys	8	16.9	5.52	

In Grade 1 and Grade 9 no significant difference was observed between the average performance of girls and boys.



# QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

## TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD – Harper Lee

### Question 1

How do Jem and Dill react to the court proceedings they witness at Tom’s trial?

[20]

#### Comments of Examiners

Most candidates narrated the proceedings of the trial in detail, without specifically referring to Jem’s or Dill’s reactions.

Candidates frequently wrote Jem was ‘heartbroken’ but did not explain or elaborate.

Many missed the point of the children being in the court without permission and of Dill wanting to become a clown. Jem’s disillusionment with the judicial system and the people of Maycomb was often overlooked, as was his concern for Atticus and surprise at the juror holding out the longest.

Some candidates wrote about Jem and Dill together but mixed up the reactions.

In many cases, the ‘roly poly’ incident was dealt with in detail but the immediate reaction of Jem was ignored or incomplete.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- The novel should be read thoroughly to assimilate details and nuances. Accuracy and clarity are necessary. Statement and opinion must be supported by examples from text.
- Mind maps showing the reactions and motivation of different characters is a suggested tool.
- The focus of the question needs to be understood - there is a difference between the trial as a whole and the reactions of specific characters to it.
- Teachers should explain how even a well narrated answer need not fetch a high score if the narration is irrelevant to the focus of the question.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 1

The children, Scout, Dill and Jem, **steal away** to attend the trial and sit in the Coloured balcony. Outside the court house the scene is that of a picnic. Jem explains what he knows about Dolphus Raymond to the others and once inside keeps a keen watch on the proceedings.

After Atticus examined Heck Tate and established that no doctor had been called and that Mayella was bruised in a way that indicated her attacker was left-handed, Jem had a “purposeful half-grin” and was **happy about “corroborating evidence”**. Even when asked by Reverend Sykes to take Scout

out of the court room to avoid hearing Bob Ewell's vulgarity, he did not want to leave. Scout knew Jem would get his way because "nothing could make him leave now". After Bob Ewell's testimony, it seemed as if he was having a "quiet fit", exulting, "We've got him!" Until the verdict shattered his illusions, **Jem was convinced that Atticus was going to win the case**. When the verdict was pronounced as guilty, "**it was Jem's turn to cry**" and mutter, "It ain't right."

Both Aunt Alexandra and Miss Maudie noticed Jem's disillusionment. Miss Maudie, for the first time, gave him a slice from the big cake and tried to tell Jem things were not as bad as they seemed. He was **heartbroken that Maycomb people were not the "best folks in the world"** as he had thought. Miss Maudie tried to explain to him that what had happened was a "baby step".

On getting the news about Bob Ewell spitting on Atticus, Jem was **worried about Atticus's safety** and wondered why Atticus did not carry a gun. He got into a discussion with Atticus one evening, worried about **what would happen to Tom if he lost his appeal**. He thought the death penalty unfair and that **juries ought to be done away with**. Although Atticus tried to explain to him that prejudice often came between "reasonable men" and "reason", Jem asserted it was not "right". He **wished people like them and Miss Maudie would sit on juries**. Jem's response was one of an innocent child with a firm belief in the correctness of things and the sanctity of justice. He was **astonished the juror who had held out** the longest was connected to the Cunninghams.

When Gilmer started cross examining Tom, Scout had to take **Dill out because he had started crying**, at first quietly and then with heaving sobs. He tried to pull himself together but finally confessed he was **agitated because Gilmer had been "talking so hateful" to Tom**. He felt the lawyer had no right to use the tone on Tom just because he was a Negro – it **made him "sick"**. He was comforted by Dolphus Raymond who allowed him a few sips from his paper bag, and Dill grinned at the discovery that the contents were Coca-Cola. Dill's reaction was summed up by Dolphus Raymond:

Things haven't caught up with that one's instinct yet. Let him get a little older and he won't get sick and cry.

Cry about the simple hell people give other people—without even thinking. Cry about the hell white people give coloured folks, without even stopping to think that they're people, too

Dill professed he **wanted to become a clown** when he grew up because as one he could do the one thing he could about people – laugh his head off. He saw people around as deserving of "ridin' broomsticks".

*To be brought out:*

- The children plan to be at the trial without the knowledge of the adults.
- Scout's description of their presence in the courtroom.
- Jem's complete involvement with the proceedings, his confidence in his father's defence and the legal system.
- Dill's pain and agony at the humiliation of Tom, and the empathy shown by Dolphus Raymond
- Dill's own life of neglect and rejection and how it affects his reaction to the humiliation of Tom.
- Jem tries to understand things from his acquaintance with the law and courts.
- Jem's frustration at the outcome, his disappointment and disillusionment

*[Comparison of the reaction of the two boys, Dill as he relates Tom's humiliation to his own life of neglect and rejection; and Jem as his eyes are opened to the unjust legal system and dangerously prejudiced society. Relevant quotes to be included]*



## Question 2

What role do the Ewells play in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

[20]

### Comments of Examiners

This question was attempted by several candidates.

In several cases, the thematic role not given adequate attention although actions were elaborated upon.

Burriss Ewell missed out in many answers. Although Bob Ewell was written about, even where his children were mentioned, details to support roles of Burriss and Mayella were left out. For instance, Burriss' role in author's comment on the education system and his foreshadowing of a darker evil was largely omitted even where the 'cootie' incident was narrated.

Some candidates based Q1 and Q2 on the same material (the trial) hence the larger role of the Ewells in the theme of social prejudice and 'caste system', evil in society was overlooked.

Hardly any candidate wrote how Bob Ewell by contrast brought out Atticus' character and principles as well as his parenting.

### Suggestions for teachers

- The question focused on all the Ewells, and this had to be understood.
- The novel should be read so that appearance of characters at various points (not just during central events) is tracked and collated.
- In such a specific question, even seemingly minor characters assume importance.
- The concept of role that a character plays in bringing out a theme or furthering the plot must be polished.
- Point plus detail to illustrate are important, but if detail cannot be remembered, at least the point must be mentioned to get some marks. Repeated points do not get credit more than once.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 2

Robert E. Lee "Bob" Ewell is the **main antagonist** - he has a daughter named Mayella and a younger son named Burriss, as well as six other unnamed children. He is an alcoholic, poaching game to feed his family because he spends whatever money they legally gain via government "relief checks" on alcohol. It is implied that he was the one who abused his daughter Mayella Ewell. Tom Robinson was convicted because he is a Negro whose accuser is white. Upon hearing of Tom's death, Bob is absolutely gleeful, gloating about his success. After being humiliated at the trial, however, he goes on a quest for **revenge**. He begins by spitting in Atticus' face, followed by a failed attempt to break into the home of Judge Taylor, finally menacing Helen, the poor widow of Tom Robinson. Ewell then attempts to murder Jem and Scout Finch with a knife to complete his revenge. Fortunately, Boo Radley saves Jem and Scout and it is believed that he kills Ewell with the knife. Heck Tate, the sheriff, puts in the official report that Bob Ewell fell on his own knife and died.

Bob is the most evil character in the novel: Crude, rude and completely socially unacceptable, he beats his daughter (and possibly even has sexual relations with her); fails to provide for his children or see

that they go to school; drinks up his paycheck; falsely accuses a man of a capital crime which leads to Tom's death; stalks Tom's wife, Helen, and croons "foul words" to her; threatens to kill Atticus; and, eventually, tries to kill Atticus's children. Ewell represents the dark side of the South: ignorance, poverty, squalor, and hate-filled racial prejudice. Atticus, who rarely has a bad word to say about anyone, refers to the Ewell family as "the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations."

He is a "little man" who rarely bathed except for the trial -

"that made him any better than his nearest neighbors... if scrubbed with lye soap in very hot water, his skin was white."

He had

... wispy new-washed hair... his nose was thin, pointed and shiny; he had no chin to speak of...

He chews tobacco; and he often smells of alcohol, as Scout notes when they are attacked on Halloween night. Racist, angry and hateful to nearly everyone he encounters, Bob is the epitome of "trash."

*Compilation of internet notes for overview*

*Relevant quotes/references to text:*

- "Let us leave it at this," said Atticus dryly. "You, Miss Scout Finch, are of the common folk. You must obey the law." He said that the **Ewells were members of an exclusive society made up of Ewells. In certain circumstances, the common folk judiciously allowed them certain privileges by the simple method of becoming blind to some of the Ewells' activities.** They didn't have to go to school, for one thing. Another thing, Mr. Bob Ewell, Burris's father, was permitted to hunt and trap out of season. "Atticus, that's bad," I said. In Maycomb County, hunting out of season was a misdemeanor at law, a capital felony in the eyes of the populace. "It's against the law, all right," said my father, "and it's certainly bad, but when a man spends his relief checks on green whiskey his children have a way of crying from hunger pains. I don't know of any landowner around here who begrudges those children any game their father can hit." "Mr. Ewell shouldn't do that-" "Of course he shouldn't, but he'll never change his ways."
- "Mr. Ewell?" My memory stirred. "Does he have anything to do with those Ewells that come every first day of school an' then go home? Why, **Atticus said they were absolute trash—I never heard Atticus talk about folks the way he talked about the Ewells.** He said-" "Yeah, those are the ones."
- "He meant it when he said it," said Atticus. "Jem, see if you can stand in Bob Ewell's shoes a minute. **I destroyed his last shred of credibility at that trial, if he had any to begin with. The man had to have some kind of comeback, his kind always does. So if spitting in my face and threatening me saved Mayella Ewell one extra beating, that's something I'll gladly take.** He had to take it out on somebody and I'd rather it be me than that houseful of children out there. You understand?" Jem nodded. Aunt Alexandra entered the room as Atticus was saying, "We don't have anything to fear from Bob Ewell, he got it all out of his system that morning." "I wouldn't be so sure of that, Atticus," she said. "**His kind'd do anything to pay off a grudge. You know how those people are.**" "What on earth could Ewell do to me, sister?" "Something furtive," Aunt Alexandra said. "You may count on that."

- The first thing was that Mr. Bob Ewell acquired and lost a job in a matter of days and probably made himself unique in the annals of the nineteen-thirties: he was **the only man I ever heard of who was fired from the WPA for laziness**. I suppose his brief burst of fame brought on a briefer burst of industry, but his job lasted only as long as his notoriety: Mr. Ewell found himself as forgotten as Tom Robinson. Thereafter, he resumed his regular weekly appearances at the welfare office for his check, and received it with no grace amid obscure mutterings that the bastards who thought they ran this town wouldn't permit an honest man to make a living. Ruth Jones, the welfare lady, said Mr. Ewell openly accused Atticus of getting his job.
- “You don't know if Bob Ewell cut that screen, you don't know who did it,” said Atticus. “But I can guess. I proved him a liar but John made him look like a fool. All the time Ewell was on the stand I couldn't dare look at John and keep a straight face. John looked at him as if he were a three-legged chicken or a square egg. Don't tell me judges don't try to prejudice juries,” Atticus chuckled.
- Atticus shook his head. “I can't conceive of a man who'd—” “Mr. Finch, there's just some kind of men you have to shoot before you can say hidy to 'em. Even then, they ain't worth the bullet it takes to shoot 'em. Ewell 'as one of 'em.” Atticus said, “I thought he got it all out of him the day he threatened me. Even if he hadn't, I thought he'd come after me.” **“He had guts enough to pester a poor colored woman, he had guts enough to pester Judge Taylor when he thought the house was empty, so do you think he'da met you to your face in daylight?”** Mr. Tate sighed.

**Role:**

- Evil in Maycomb – antagonist
- Racial hatred, social hierarchy, justice - injustice (theme)
- Vengeful – attempt to kill – get even with Atticus and Judge Taylor (plot)
- Trial and death of Tom Robinson (plot)
- Brings out Atticus' character and principles (character)

**Burriss Ewell** – only seen on the first day of school – dirty, unwashed, with “cooties” in his hair. He is insolent, crude and reduces Miss Caroline to tears. She is aghast at his behaviour; he makes it clear he comes to school only under compulsion to mark his mandatory attendance for the truant lady.

**Role:**

- Introduces the Ewells in the novel – “trash” - hierarchy in Maycomb – foreshadowing of the greater ruin the Ewells are going to cause
- Part of the comment on the education system that cannot enforce rules – truant officer makes half-hearted attempts – institutional education cannot really put a child on the right path

**Mayella** – instrumental in Tom Robinson's imprisonment and death – first seen at the **trial** – hostile, wary – **unused to courtesy** – thinks Atticus is making fun of her – **no friends** - sticks by her testimony that Tom Robinson grabbed her although Atticus makes a stirring speech about how she committed the cardinal sin of kissing a black man and then tried to cover her fault by accusing him – it is suggested she is abused by her father – her childhood has gone in the garbage dump, **shouldering responsibilities beyond her years**, looking after a brood of siblings – the exception is the **red geraniums** that she tends to perhaps indicating her desire for a better life and a softer side to her nature.

*Relevant quotes/references to text:*

- Atticus was trying to show, it seemed to me, that **Mr. Ewell could have beaten up Mayella**. That much I could follow. If her right eye was blacked and she was beaten mostly on the right side of the face, it would tend to show that a left-handed person did it.
- their relief check was far from enough to feed the family, and there was strong suspicion that Papa drank it up anyway—he sometimes went off in the swamp for days and came home sick; the weather was seldom cold enough to require shoes, but when it was, you could make dandy ones from strips of old tires; the family hauled its water in buckets from a spring that ran out at one end of the dump—they kept the surrounding area clear of trash—and it was everybody for himself as far as keeping clean went: if you wanted to wash you hauled your own water; the younger children had perpetual colds and suffered from chronic ground-itch; there was a lady who came around sometimes and asked Mayella why she didn't stay in school—she wrote down the answer; with two members of the family reading and writing, there was no need for the rest of them to learn—Papa needed them at home.
- Senseless killing—Tom had been given due process of law to the day of his death; he had been tried openly and convicted by twelve good men and true; my father had fought for him all the way. Then Mr. Underwood's meaning became clear: Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. **Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.**

**Role:**

- **Sometimes seen as a mockingbird** (*opinion*), yet cannot be one since mockingbirds are innocent and harmless and Mayella was not – she caused great damage, out of fear of her father probably but destruction nevertheless:  
 “As Tom Robinson gave his testimony, it came to me that Mayella Ewell must have been the loneliest person in the world. She was even lonelier than Boo Radley, who had not been out of the house in twenty-five years. When Atticus asked had she any friends, she seemed not to know what he meant, then she thought he was making fun of her. She was as sad, I thought, as what Jem called a mixed child: white people wouldn't have anything to do with her because she lived among pigs; Negroes wouldn't have anything to do with her because she was white. She couldn't live like Mr. Dolphus Raymond, who preferred the company of Negroes, because she didn't own a riverbank and she wasn't from a fine old family. Nobody said, “That's just their way,” about the Ewells. Maycomb gave them Christmas baskets, welfare money, and the back of its hand. Tom Robinson was probably the only person who was ever decent to her. But she said he took advantage of her, and when she stood up she looked at him as if he were dirt beneath her feet.”
- Maycomb's **prejudice** (*theme*) – jury influenced by Tom Robinson's temerity to feel sorry for a white woman – her word proved stronger than Tom's only because of the colour of her skin.
- Role in **plot** crucial – centre of the trial.

## Question 3

Briefly narrate the 'mad dog incident' in *To Kill a Mockingbird* highlighting its symbolism in the novel. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

Some answers focused on Calpurnia's reaction more than on the actions of Atticus and Heck Tate.

Symbolism was not fully addressed – some candidates omitted it altogether while others were vague about it.

Hardly any candidates referred to the similarity in the names of Tim Johnson and Tom Robinson.

Surprisingly, many candidates did not think Atticus' role as saviour and the one Maycomb looks to in times of need, important enough to warrant a mention. Nor did they talk of his strength and resolve springing from a desire to protect his family.

The children's change of opinion – viewing their father as a 'hero' – not brought out.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Candidates must be thorough with narrative sequence of an incident.
- All points of narration should be balanced, rather than giving elaborate details of only a part of it at the cost of the rest.
- Incidents usually contribute to a whole, in terms of plot, theme and character. This must be analysed and discussed in class.
- Students must be taught to read questions carefully: this question had both narration and symbolism as cues clearly given in the question itself.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 3

Atticus, Scout says, is somewhat older than most of the other fathers in Maycomb. His relatively advanced age often embarrasses his children—he wears glasses and reads, for instance, instead of hunting and fishing like the other men in town. One day, however, a mad dog appears, wandering down the main street toward the Finches' house. Calpurnia warns everyone on the street, including the Radleys, and calls Atticus, who returns home with Heck Tate, the sheriff of Maycomb. Heck brings a rifle and asks Atticus to shoot the animal. To Jem and Scout's amazement, Atticus does so, hitting the dog with his first shot despite his considerable distance from the dog. Later, Miss Maudie tells Jem and Scout that, as a young man, Atticus was the best shot in the county—"One-shot Finch." Scout is eager to brag about this, but Jem tells her to keep it a secret, because if Atticus wanted them to know, he would have told them.

The mad dog in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is symbolic of a few things. First, the **mad dog represents the "madness" that Atticus has to face now that he has taken on Tom Robinson's case.** The community has rallied against Atticus because they believe that Robinson is guilty simply because he is black. Throughout the book, the Finch family has to buffer themselves against this racism. So the mad dog represents the community's madness that is based on racism. Further, the mad dog (and the scene surrounding him) is symbolic of **Atticus's strength and resolve and his desire to protect his family.** When the mad dog threatens his family, he immediately grabs a rifle

and shoots the dog. The children are surprised by this because normally Atticus is very calm. However, he is a good shot, and the dog dies quickly. This scene shows that Atticus will do anything to protect his family from the madness around them. He is the one Maycomb turns to in times of need – the hero and saviour.

Atticus has to be persuaded to shoot the dog. He sees that the dog is clearly a danger to his family and the public, and further appears to be in great misery. The important point is that Atticus is reluctant to hurt the dog, to demonstrate his marksmanship, and to appear as a public hero. *Before shooting the dog he takes off his glasses*; afterward, he grinds the broken lenses underfoot. His confidence and his willingness to go into danger are part of his motivation for defending Tom Robinson against a public opinion that is repugnant to him.

When Atticus shoots the dog, his children Scout and Jem who are witnessing it see **their father radically changed**. That is their whole understanding and perception of their father as a sensible, respectable character who is true to his values and beliefs and has a very wise and mature view of the world. In killing the ‘mad’ dog, the first initial reaction for the reader is that of a strong sense of irony, that “why would Atticus do a cruel thing like that?”

This concept is an idyllic symbol that represents the whole society of Maycomb as a whole. There is the way Atticus is indeed against using a gun normally as it ‘gives him an unfair advantage over nature’, but since he knew he had to get rid of the rabid dog and keep it from harm to anyone, he did do it. He demonstrated that he had the ability to be strong and put himself between two powerful opposing forces – innocence and danger -, and do what he must but keep in line without losing his morality.

The stray dog’s name was Tim Johnson, which is a remarkably peculiar thing to call a dog. So, the only reason for that would be for the purpose of a symbolic meaning – it sounds like *Tom Robinson*, giving off the **implication that the dog and the Negro are consecutively related to each other**.

We know the symbolic value of the rabid dog incident can **represent the whole township of Maycomb**. There is a dog infected with rabies that has appeared in the street of the Finches’ neighbourhood, inflicting supreme concern and threat to the residents, and out of all who just bolt their doors and watch the scene anxiously, Atticus, along with Miss Maudie, is the only one who has the will to step up and be the one to deal with the dog. This concept is evident in the way that the **township on a whole has the problem of prejudice, dominated by sheer racial discrimination amongst the people**; as it seems nobody can deal with the issue itself, let alone with a single problematic dog.

So again, on the bigger scale, Atticus has the desire to be on the Negro Tom Robinson’s side in his trial. If he were not defending for Tom, nobody would, and he would be left to be at the mercy of the unjust white regulators and be charged for uncalled-for guilt of raping a white woman, only because he is a *black* person. There is a *mad* dog in amongst a *mad* society, embodying the forecast of events to do with Tom Robinson’s trial that are to unfold. Atticus sees the importance of abiding with the black man, and then help emphasise the point that Black people should be treated more fairly and a more just way.

*[Relevant quotes to be included]*



## THE HUNGRY TIDE – Amitav Ghosh

### Question 4

The *Hungry Tide* is a significant work in the field of nature-oriented literature. Discuss this observation using, in detail, any three distinct examples from the novel. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

Very few candidates attempted this question. Some centres handled it well but others had very general and rambling answers.

Three distinct examples, as asked in the question, were not clearly given by many candidates. Even in the case of cited examples, the details and chronology were missing.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Distinct theme-based analysis must be a skill developed in class.
- Written practice and feedback on how to structure an answer to enhance readability and relevance to question is necessary.
- Questions such as this demand the subject skill of compressing wide and scattered information into an organised and coherent whole. This skill must be taught and practiced.
- Students should be encouraged to make their own point-wise notes, collating instances under themes written as sub-headings.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 4

In the novel, Piya is a marine biologist who comes to the Sunderbans to study the Irrawady dolphins and her excitement on seeing them conveys the importance of ecology and conservation as well as the threat to the existence of wildlife posed by man. Their seemingly strange behaviour troubled Piya and made her wonder if her knowledge about their patterns was incorrect or incomplete. The “universe of possibilities” that opened up in her mind shows the vast potential of nature and that man cannot fathom all its mysteries.

When Moyna takes Kanai around, she tells him there is no future in catching crabs and it is not the life she seeks for her son. She knows the trade will not last long because of the damage caused by the new nylon nets that trap the eggs of other fish as well. Nilima wanted to get the nets banned but was not successful because of the nexus between traders and politicians and the money to be made in prawns. The ecological devastation and bleak future unrealised by greedy men is thus highlighted.

The description of Fokir's crab catching and of the crabs themselves, as well as Piya's realisation that her pursuit of dolphins and his would not get into each other's way shows the co-existence of the different. She finds crabs scuttling around interesting and recalls all that she knows of them: the "sanitation department and a janitorial team rolled into one", keeping the mangroves alive and clean. She thought of the importance of even the little creatures in the whole scheme of things, even in hers because if Fokir had not been chasing after crabs, he would not have brought her where there were dolphins:

Maybe the ancients had got it right after all – perhaps it was the crab that ruled the tide of her destiny.

Fokir's **worship in the mangroves** has Piya mystified. He obviously is one with his surroundings in the way he handles the boat and saves her from the mud. Even his wife tells Kanai that he does things differently in the wild to what the other menfolk do. His showing Piya the paw brings into focus once again the presence of tigers in the Sunderbans. Ghosh has described the life in the Sunderbans vividly, based on his own travels in the tide country and the richness of the life and the mangroves is evident. Also clear is the "symbiosis between human beings and a population of wild animals" as Piya observes with awe when the dolphins herd smaller fish into the fishermen's nets and get to eat those the fishermen push to the bottom of the water.

The local reality is that of the Sundarbans, a densely populated archipelago in the Bay of Bengal, which straddles Indian west Bengal and Bangladesh. The tide country people have an epic narrative of origins that they pass on orally. They have a kind of local religion – they worship a Goddess called Bon Bibi – but the epic of Bon Bibi is strongly inflected by Islamic influences. The land itself is inconstant – subject to sometimes radical alterations as a result of late summer storms. Whole islands are washed away by the cyclones that sweep in with huge tidal surges. Thousands of human beings and animals routinely die in these storms. Alongside these natural catastrophes are the man-made ones.

This river delta, consisting of innumerable islands which appear and disappear according to the whims of tides and seasons, "a terrain where the boundaries between land and water are always mutating, always unpredictable", is a landscape in which the sea, the river, the land, humans and animals all co-exist – sometimes in harmony, but often in competition.

The river dolphin, the **Orcella**, is part of both the plot and symbolism of the novel. The Orcella is the reason Piya seeks the help of a local like Fokir and grows closer to him, eventually feeling completely safe with him. However, the marine creature also stands for the entire mangrove ecosystem, including the local folk, who are endangered and need to be sought out with preservation as aim. Fokir, in spite of being one with nature, still has to compete with the Bengal Tiger for survival. People and creatures alike are the marginalised, threatened species.

The **conflict at Morichjhapi** itself has environmental intonation. The settlers were looking for refuge and a friendly land while the government was keen on evicting them because that was forest land and no place for squatters. These settlers are also from the Sunderban's edge and Kusum feels an affinity with them as they with the land – they "hankered for our tide country mud". Dispossessed of their land and disinherited, they represent the peoples torn away from their homeland.

The novel explores the plight of displaced peoples (a familiar Ghosh theme), here specifically a group of refugees from Bangladesh who found themselves in a confrontation with the Indian state in 1979.



The other conceptual question is how **humans share a complex and dangerous ecosystem with animals** (here, dolphins and tigers). The Bay of Bengal is one of the only habitats where Bengal Tigers continue to live in the wild. They are zealously protected by various international environmental groups (who apply economic pressure on the Indian and Bangladeshi governments to maintain the tiger habitats by military force). But in the name of tiger preservation (or "reservation," we might say), human lives are threatened: the tigers routinely maul and often kill islanders. Though there are the obvious modern devices that might be used to protect the islanders, the state allows the deaths to continue. In the Sunderbans, Ghosh argues, human lives are valued somewhat lower than those of tigers. The conflict is brought out in the clash between the captured tiger that Piya tries to save and the angry scared mob. In the ensuing argument between Kanai and Piya the two points of view emerge.

Ghosh presents an environmental issue which has come to be recognized as one of the fundamental problem areas in conservationism – the conflict between conservation and human rights. In this conflict, a battle line has come to be drawn between environmentally conscious groups fighting on the side of non-human nature, and human-rights groups on the side of the poor, the dispossessed and underdeveloped peoples of the world, with precious little middle ground being acknowledged by either side. *The Hungry Tide*, with its complex mixture of people and landscape, steps into this conflict with an implied plea for moderation to both sides – a plea for the acknowledgement and understanding of the plight of the poor by environmentalists, and that of animals and nature by human-rights groups.

**Intrusion and challenging nature has repercussions.** The death of Fokir indicates the failure of globalization and preservation policies by utilising knowledge of the locals. Exploitation of the Sunderbans and the native people by outside forces spells disaster, just as the interference in the natural order in Canning does. The Sunderbans are anyway prone to tidal waves and cyclones, and are difficult for man to artificially mould and control:

It is one of those areas of the world where the lie of the land mocks the absurdity of international treaties, because it is virtually impossible to enforce border laws on a territory that constantly shifts, submerges and resurfaces with the ebb and flow of the tide....

Although Piya and Kanai have roots there, they cannot escape being categorised as outsiders since they cannot survive this land without the help of the local people like Fokir. Fokir is one with the rhythms of nature, but the scene of Piya's drowning in the muddy waters of the river indicates that the environment will not present any relief in the future:

Rivers like Ganga and the Brahmaputra shroud this window [Snell's window] with a curtain of silt: in their occluded waters light loses its directionality within a few inches of the surface. Beneath this lies a flowing stream of suspended matter in which visibility does not extend beyond an arm's length. With no lighted portal to point the way, top and bottom and up and down become very quickly confused.

Fokir dies in the cyclone trying to save Piya. It suggests that attempts to bring the local and the global together in an ecologically volatile environment are doomed to failure.

*[Any three examples given in some detail from among above. Relevant quotes to be included]*

## Question 5

Write short notes on:

[20]

- (a) Moyna
- (b) Kanai

### Comments of Examiners

By and large, this question was fairly well-addressed. However, in some cases, for a short note, the answer on characters was too long with some confusion about what was being asked for. A number of candidates could not select the key points about characters. In some cases, while the answers were comprehensive, if long (time management being affected) the change in the Moyna – Piya relationship was ignored. Kanai was more difficult for candidates than Moyna, particularly his relationship with Fokir.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Students should be able to draw out key points and prioritise major and supporting points.
- Students should be given practice in class so that they can judge the difference between a full-length 20 mark answer on a character and a short note on his or her essential qualities.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 5

(a) **Moyna:**

Fokir, Moyna, Kusum, Horen are the characters who are insiders in the Sundarbans. Fokir is Kusum's son. After the death of Kusum in that massacre, he is looked after by her distant relative, Horen. Fokir grows up to be an illiterate fisherman, but he knows and lives the ways of the waters and the wildlife of the Sundarbans. And he always remains an insider. Like Fokir, **Moyna is also brought up in that particular land and marries Fokir.**

**Moyna, in spite of her dissatisfaction with Fokir's unworthy ways, recognizes his well-adjusted inner core and chooses to live with him.** She is distraught at his absence and **cares for his safety.**

During an expedition, Fokir had given Piya his wife's sari, to use as a pillow. Piya, got the smell of the Moyna's body woven into the threads of the sari. In the morning when she returns the sari to Fokir, she had even silently told the woman in her mind, that all was well and nothing had happened that would have jeopardized the Moyna's relation with Fokir. So at a subconscious level, even at times at a conscious level, she is aware of a certain closeness she felt towards Fokir that transgressed the limits of erotic human relationship, those defining limits that was barred by society to happen. Yet, the body understands its own language and the mind must find a way to cope that which is deemed does not happen. **She remains close to**

**Moyna, especially now in the absence of Fokir.** The zone of doubt and mistrust has died with Fokir. They can now be close to each other, Piya and Moyna.

Fokir never exposed his feelings openly to his wife Moyna. In fact, **he is distant, non-communicative and lost in himself.** Yet he is devoted to her. He carries her sari whenever he is at sea for days either fishing or on the expedition with Piya. It serves as his pillow, his blanket, even a curtain to keep his body from being visible to an onlooker. **Her name and his son's name were the last words, breathed into Piya's ears,** as he died in her arms on that island lashed by cyclone and struck by the tree trunk. Yet, in that dying moment, he recognizes the silent words spoken through Piya's eyes of how richly he is loved by her. It is said, without words. Fokir accepts it, without resistance. They have both known, though none has put it in words, ever.

*About Moyna:*

- Nurse at Lusibari hospital
- Ambitious – determined
- Environmental concerns – aware of hazards of new techniques of fishermen
- Jealous – unexpressed passion
- Unexplained intimacy with Kanai
- Sensitive enough to modify contents of tiffin for Piya
- Happy at money Piya gave
- Frustrated at Fokir's inclination to do the opposite of what other men did.

(b)

Kanai:

At the beginning of the novel, Kanai Dutt, a **middle-aged businessman from New Delhi**, encounters Piyali Roy, or Piya, a young marine biologist from Seattle. They are on a train to Canning, in south-eastern India, from where they will go by boat to the Sundarban Islands, an archipelago in the Ganges Delta made up of a number of small, mangrove-covered islands. Piya has a grant to study a rare species of river dolphin, while Kanai has been **asked by his aunt to peruse a notebook left by his uncle Nirmal Bose**, who died under mysterious circumstances during a rebellion thirty years earlier. Before they separate at Canning, Kanai politely **invites Piya** to visit his aunt at her home on Lusibari, one of the Sundarbans' most remote islands.

While Piya explores the present, Kanai ventures into the area's past. First his aunt, Nilima Bose, delivers a lecture about the early history of the Sundarbans, and then Kanai begins reading the notebook of Nirmal, his late uncle. From that point on, the narrator will periodically insert into the story a separate, italicized chapter representing a section of the notebook. Kanai will not read the final entry until about two-thirds of the way through the novel.

Kanai leaves her cold. **Piya is not impressed with Kania's superciliousness**, and between him and Fokir, finds herself constantly leaning towards the natural, unalloyed world that Fokir represents.

Ghosh brings in the **debate about human settlements in forested lands through Piya and Kanai.** Given the vagaries of nature in this place, with its unrelenting storms, changing tides and thriving wild life, Piya believes God probably intended it that way and any human intrusion that harms it must be disallowed.

**On the other hand, Kanai supports the theory of human beings getting preference over animals.** But again, Piya argues that this kind of short shrift shown to lesser beings will never end, whether they are animals or human beings.

The face-off between Fokir and Kanai that happens during their boat trip, is rightly then the sign of the **growing hostility between the ‘civilised world’ and rustics.** Here, Fokir’s fear of the outsiders (Kanai) can be alternatively read as nature’s resistance to people like Kanai who ‘intrude’ upon its territory.

There’s another story that runs parallel to this one. Kanai reads out notes from his uncles' **diary which allows the author to introduce the readers to a different time period in Sundarbans’ history,** its myths, legends, and compulsions. Kanai also remembers a conversation with Nirmal in which his uncle tells him about Sir Daniel Hamilton, who had seen the tide country islands and realized their worth.

Kanai Dutt is a **linguist who runs a translation bureau** in Delhi. Ghosh placed him as an **outsider,** “Kanai was the one other 'outsider' on the platform. . .”. At the age of forty he comes back to Lucibari to read the journal left by his uncle Nirmal during the last days of his life at Morichjhāpi. Kanai comes back Lucibari to just read that journal. He has nothing to do with the culture and environment of Lucibari so he is regarded as an outsider.

Kanai as a translator-cum-interpreter has the knowledge of six languages. He takes the job of narrating Nirmal's journal in English which is how the Morichjhāpi incident is communicated to the reader. He also takes the responsibility, **at a later stage of translating Fokir and other local people to Piya.** At one point Piya asks Kanai to explain the content of a traditional song that Fokir is chanting. Kanai replies: “You asked me what Fokir was singing and I said I couldn't translate it: it was too difficult. And this was a history that is not just his own but also of this place, the tide country”. Thus, despite his sound knowledge, Kanai becomes ignorant. Fokir is an illiterate person; his ignorance shapes his knowledge about nature. He never shows his knowledge. Through him Ghosh articulates the primary subaltern concern of being heard.

Most remarkable is Ghosh's treatment of Kanai, a self-important, sometimes cocksure individual who ultimately becomes the locus of some of the novel's central reflections on language and on translation. It is through Kanai's translation, his mediating sensibility, that Nirmal's personal record, the Rilke that he reads in Buddhadeva Bose's Bangla translation, and the folk narrative of Bon Bibi that he writes down from Fokir's recitation, reach us, so the novel seems to claim, in English prose and verse. Some Bengali reviewers of *The Hungry Tide* have already asserted that their experience of reading it was like that of reading a novel in Bangla. This claim seems to me mistaken. Rather, the novel seems to push us into the crisis at the heart of translation, the paradox of representation itself. At one level, everything in the novel is translated, in that it seeks to represent, in English, a life, a culture, that is experienced principally through the medium of Bangla and its local variants. At another, nothing is: if representation is always a form of translation, one language is at any time as good as another - at most it may involve special difficulties that are also special opportunities. The one moment at which Kanai is robbed of the language that is his livelihood and his means of control is when, stranded on the mudbank, he sees the tiger. "The sounds and signs that had served, in combination, as the sluices between his mind and senses had collapsed: his mind was swamped by a flood of pure sensation." The meeting with the tiger, which may mean death or life, here as in the story of Dukhey and Dokkhin Rai, lies at that boundary of language which representation seeks, but never succeeds in containing.

## Question 6

What was the Morichjhapi incident? How does it play a central role in the novel *The Hungry Tide*? [20]

### Comments of Examiners

Despite it being a key incident, points were missing in many answers, such as, the origin of the refugees, the government action and reasons, the place they were transported to.

While narration was better handled, many candidates did not write about its role in the novel. Candidates also made errors in facts.

### Suggestions for teachers

- All incidents, especially core ones, should be thoroughly studied and every relevant aspect of it with key facts driven home.
- Classes should have discussion of sequence of events that constitute an incident and analysis of why that incident has been placed in the novel.
- Specific incident-based answers need accuracy of facts and textual detail.
- Reading the question and taking direction from key words in it is an important skill.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 6

The Morichjhapi incident is revealed in Kanai's uncle's journal. Tens of thousands of displaced refugees tried to settle on one of the uninhabited islands in the Sunderbans but were evicted by the government in the name of conservation. This in itself highlights the **theme of a novel that talks about the conflict between man and nature**. The incident occurred in 1978 when the refugees, disenchanted with the resettlement in central India, came to the Sunderbans to settle down in more familiar land. Nilima called the "resettlement" "more like a concentration camp, or a prison" – an indictment indeed coming from a character cautious about going against the government for the sake of her trust. The plight of poor, displaced people is highlighted, but that does not dilute the conflict with nature that these people intrude upon to survive. The novel seems to **criticise environmentalism where human beings are given no importance** in a system where access to resources is enforced by economic forces, often international. Through this incident, the novel plays out its concerns with habitat, territory, ecology and conservation – and all the ethical issues that are attendant.

Nilima also describes matter-of-factly **the incident** to Kanai. Some refugees had occupied one of the islands in the forest. The **confrontation** with the authorities was violent as the government tried to force the refugees to return to the resettlement camp in central India by putting them into trucks and

buses and carting them away. The refugees were a **mixed lot**: some descended from the first settlers, others arriving in successive waves, some after Partition and the Bangladesh war of 1971, still others even more recently after other islands were forcibly depopulated for wildlife conservation projects.

The government banned migration to and from Morichjhapi resorting to Section 144 to prevent a large gathering of people in one place. The police arrived on **speedboats and used loudspeakers** to ask the settlers to leave. The settlers called back with their cry for their homeland and pain associated with losing the homeland. This **siege** went on for many days. Kusum says:

The worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit there, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, was worth less than dirt or dust.

She is not happy that the island had to be saved for animals, a reserve forest paid for by international funds.

**Nirmal, the idealist revolutionary, and Kusum are drawn into the struggle** of the refugees. Before his death, Nirmal had started **behaving erratically**. Nirmal was fired by the idea of revolution that Morichjhapi stood for. His diary began from May 15, 1979 and it was written in a day and a night, finished hours before the assault began. While the settlers merely wanted a home, Nirmal saw it as something utopian for the dispossessed. In his constant invocation of Rilke, **Nirmal felt incomplete because he could never live up to his revolutionary ideals**. In their responses to this issue, Nirmal and Nilima reveal their disparate natures: one revolutionary, the other pragmatic. This difference puts a **strain on their relationship** and marriage, and Nilima sadly notes the estrangement. In the widening gulf between them, **contrasting aspects of utopia, liberalism and pragmatism** are brought out. The revolution brought Kusum and Nirmal close – Kanai felt that for Nirmal what Kusum “stood for was the embodiment of Rilke’s idea of transformation.” **Kanai becomes a part of the Morichjhapi incident only through Nirmal’s diary**, as he reads an account that could be history, poetry, geology; otherwise, he may not have known this chapter of history at all.

Kusum sought medical help from Lusibari; Nilima was not keen to assist her since that would mean opposing the government. **Kusum was killed in the massacre** at Morichjhapi. She provides a different perspective. According to her Morichjhapi was not really a forest and even before the settlers came, the land was being used by the government for plantations. She felt the conservation justification was a misuse of the preservation of the fragile ecology of the Sunderbans just to get rid of the settlers.

Kusum’s son Fokir may be illiterate but has invaluable knowledge of the river and its inhabitants, and this is what draws Piya, a marine biologist studying a rare species of dolphin, to him. **Kusum’s yearning for a homeland is seen in her son’s bond with his**. After the Morichjhapi massacre, Fokir, Moyna, Piya and Kanai find themselves in the Sunderbans, drawn into a relationship that, like in the past, is haunted by the precarious life there - tiger attacks, unrest, eviction, tidal floods. In this precariousness and threat of extinction, **the historical event of Morichjhapi flows into the local myths** of Bon Bibi and Dukhey. The novel thus uses both history and myth.

Amitav Ghosh does not follow a chronological narrative. The novel shifts in time. The Morichjhapi incident is seen in flashback, largely from Nirmal’s point of view and is parallel to the experiences of Piya, Kanai and Fokir in the present.



## Question 7

*A Doll's House* is a play about setting oneself free. Comment with reference to the four major characters in the play. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

The roles of Torvald and Krogstad were not brought out in context of the given theme. A number of candidates could not bring out Mrs. Linde's role in furthering the theme. Nora was the one who was best handled, often at the cost of other characters.

The question said 'four major characters' despite which candidates could not discuss either four characters or the major characters.

Weightage was for four major characters and hence marks were lost, especially if answer was not balanced among the four characters.

Placing the characters in the context of 'freedom' in this play was not effectively done so candidates could not completely show how characters set themselves free and why.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Character analysis must be done as more than a narration of what characters do in the play. The connection between their words and actions and the theme or underlying message should be inferred and analyzed.
- Concepts of theme, major and minor characters and judgement of how much to write for each will develop through regular practice.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 7

The play is seen primarily as a play about the role of women and expectations of them in the society of the time. It created a furore when it was first performed in 1879. The theme of individual freedom is primarily through Nora, first seen as a childish, doll-like wife overpowered by a dominating husband who accords her diminution whether in words or in attitude. She is **bound by the conventions and patronized by Torvald**. She is his little "squirrel" and "sky lark" who does not seem to have any competence in managing her household, and can only please her husband by conforming to his idea of her and lispng her way into his attention. Nora is as good as trapped in an unequal and unsatisfying marriage. She has seen life only as an obedient daughter or an obedient wife.

Some years previously, Nora had taken the desperate measure of forgery of her father's signature to finance a convalescent trip for Torvald. Krogstad has this letter in his possession and blackmails Nora to save his job. Nora painstakingly saves money to repay the debt. **Her secret job of copying is furtive but an act of liberating herself from dependence on Torvald**. At this stage, she sees herself **'free' once she repays the debt and can be safe from Krogstad's evil machinations**, themselves a desperate act of a desperate and bitter man. Her yearning for freedom is evident when she confides that she would love to say "Damn" to her husband. At this stage, she sees herself

free from care, quite free from care; to be able to play and romp with the children; to be able to keep the house beautifully and have everything just as Torvald likes it!

Here, she defines her freedom in terms of the very things that restrict her: her role as a submissive wife and mother.

At the end after the truth is revealed, Nora elects to leave her house and family. For her, freedom **comes when she stops deceiving herself** and sees Torvald's overpowering manner for what it is – not love but domination. Shaking off her illusion, she wishes to face reality. Her hope for a miracle, that of being rescued by Torvald who had just sworn his love to her, is shattered. His self-centred exclamation on the “awful awakening” brings Nora face to face with the truth. **She walks out rejecting insincere love seeking to control, and goes out in the world, flying in the face of social conventions, in her quest for knowledge, experience and herself.** To do so, Nora gives up the security of a household and a conventional and materially comfortable life for the unknown outside world to which she had barely any exposure. **Nora's freedom comes at a cost**, the cost of pain, social disapprobation and uncertainty of facing the unfamiliar. However, she defines freedom boldly

Listen, Torvald. I have heard that when a wife deserts her

husband's house, as I am doing now, he is legally freed from all

obligations towards her. In any case, I set you free from all your

obligations. You are not to feel yourself bound in the slightest

way, any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on

both sides. See, here is your ring back. Give me mine.

**Torvald** too has his notion of freedom. For him freedom is financial. He says, “There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt.” This sense of freedom in terms of economics is appropriate in an age defined by wealth and its pursuit. Rejection of debt (seen as profligacy) is dictated by social view; Torvald's freedom is compliance with social norms and the sense of power over his household, wife in particular. He cannot see beyond social respectability and refuses to support his wife in her time of need, despite her selfless action out of concern for his health. Nora tells him that he can preserve his standing by rejecting her: “When I am out of the way, you will be free.”

**Mrs. Linde** seems surrender her freedom to conventional ties of marriage with Krogstad. Ibsen appears to be saying that it is not marriage that is constraining, but a marriage where there is unequal distribution of power between partners. Mrs. Linde has had a rough life on her own, first marrying wealth for the sake of her family and then being widowed. At that time, she was proud she could make the final days of her mother “free from care.” For her too freedom is economic, born of the need for providing basic necessities. Marriage is a way of finding fulfilment with a past lover and the security of shelter and companionship. It is her way of setting herself free from the problems of living the life of a single woman, even though as one she would have had greater control over her own finances and life than a married woman like Nora at the time.

**Krogstad**, despite being seen as the villain harassing Nora, elicits sympathy as well. He is desperate to save his job – he has commitments to keep and loves his children. He too needs to sever past shadows, and in fact his villainy stems for the desire to break free:

I had to do something; and, honestly, I don't think I've



been one of the worst. But now I must cut myself free from all that. My sons are growing up; for their sake I must try and win back as much respect as I can in the town. This post in the Bank was like the first step up for me—and now your husband is going to kick me downstairs again into the mud.

Thus, the realism in *A Doll's House* lies partly in the way it tackles the issue of individual freedom, providing no one answer for what it is or no easy solutions to the thorny issue of individual freedom versus social roles. It is a choice and a difficult one at that, for which there are no unequivocal answers or judgements.

*(Relevant quotes to be included)*

## Question 8

The various letters in the play are significant to the plot and the theme of the play *A Doll's House*. Discuss, giving adequate textual reference. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

While in some centres the major and minor letters were discussed, in others all letters were not taken up in the answers.

Some candidates gave more importance to the notes by Torvald and Linde and the card left by Dr. Rank but failed to seriously refer to the letters by Krogstad, especially the second one.

The important point of letters throwing light on Torvald's true character was not brought out by some candidates.

Most answers were about Krogstad's letters but others were excluded.

### Suggestions for teachers

- The letters in the play lead to important actions and decisions, or reveal more about characters, hence all must be studied. Why they were written, their content and the outcome need to be known thoroughly.
- Discussion of letters and contents – their impact on plot and theme must be carried out in class.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 8

Many of the plot's twists and turns depend upon the writing and reading of letters, which function within the play as the subtext that reveals the true, unpleasant nature of situations obscured by Torvald and Nora's efforts at beautification. **Krogstad writes two letters: the first reveals Nora's crime of forgery to Torvald; the second retracts his blackmail threat and returns Nora's promissory note.** The first letter, which Krogstad places in Torvald's letterbox near the end of Act Two, **represents the truth about Nora's past and initiates the inevitable dissolution of her marriage** – as Nora says immediately after Krogstad leaves, it, “We are lost.” Nora's attempts to stall Torvald from reading the letter represent her continued denial of the true nature of her marriage. **The second letter releases Nora from her obligation to Krogstad and represents her release from her obligation to Torvald.** Upon reading it, Torvald attempts to return to his and Nora's previous denial of reality, but Nora recognizes that the letters have done more than expose her actions to Torvald; **they have exposed the truth about Torvald's selfishness, and she can no longer participate in the illusion of a happy marriage.**

**Dr. Rank's method of communicating his imminent death is to leave his calling card marked with a black cross in Torvald's letterbox.** In an earlier conversation with Nora, Dr. Rank reveals his understanding of Torvald's unwillingness to accept reality when he proclaims, “Torvald is so fastidious, he cannot face up to anything ugly.” By leaving his calling card as a death notice, Dr. Rank politely attempts to keep Torvald from the “ugly” truth. Other letters include Mrs. Linde's note to Krogstad, which initiates her life-changing meeting with him after a much earlier communication that broke his heart, and Torvald's letter of dismissal to Krogstad.

*Candidates to bring out:*

- Letters have an influence on lives or reveal truth
- Letter from Helmer to Krogstad results in Nora's fear of disaster – her hope for its recall
- Nora's terror of Torvald reading Krogstad's letter
- When Nora finally wants Torvald to read letters (Act III), she has understood the value of honesty
- Letters in plot – blackmail, fear, suspense
- Letters in theme – villainy, dishonesty, hypocrisy, honesty and truth.
- Mrs. Linde forbids Krogstad to withdraw letter.

## Question 9

Bring out the character and role of Mrs. Kristine Linde in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.

[20]

### Comments of Examiners

This was a fairly popular choice of question. The character was well discussed by a number of candidates but the role was ignored, especially her traditional choice at the end and her part in bringing out the theme of marriage.

Most candidates overlooked Mrs. Linde as a foil to Nora. Some did not bring out her expository role.

A few candidates expressed the opinion that Mrs. Linde was jealous of Nora and that is why she asked Krogstad to let the truth be revealed. This should be strongly supported to gain acceptability because the common interpretation is her desire for the truth.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Assignments on character - qualities supported by words and actions and role or part played in play – need to be done in class.
- Character analysis must be taught as a composite of qualities or traits, role in terms of theme and plot, and textual support of these.
- Students are encouraged to arrive at their own opinions but they must be able to support their opinion, conventional or otherwise, with strong textual substantiation.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 9

Mrs. Kristine Linde is a friend of Nora Helmer. When Nora fails to recognise her and calls her **older, paler and thinner, it is evident life has not been kind to her**. She comes across as a **worldly-wise** woman who has **lived a difficult life and learned from it**: "I have learned to act prudently. Life, and hard, bitter necessity have taught me that."

In her younger days she chose to **sacrifice her love** for the sake of her family. Rather than marrying Nils Krogstad, she married a businessman, Mr. Linde, so that she could support her sick mother and her two younger brothers. In doing so, Kristine adopts the path **women of the time were expected to and praised for: renunciation** of personal aspirations to serve family needs.

Since her husband died bankrupt, Kristine has had to set up a small shop, teach and do whatever else was necessary to make ends meet. When she re-enters Nora's life, she is **struggling financially** and comes seeking a job at the bank. Upon the death of her husband and mother, Kristine is **free of responsibility. However, she is not content**. She feels a certain void in her life and returns to Krogstad saying she needs to "be a mother to someone" and offering herself as mother to his children. **This raises the question why a woman portrayed as a thinking, intelligent person would want to slip into the traditional groove.** She looks forward to returning to a conventional domestic life, tidying up even as she daydreams:

Somebody to work for... to live for. A home to bring happiness into. Just let me get down to it

It is incongruous with the theme of a woman discovering her own identity and dignity without a man. However, the reason could be her trying experiences and the need to escape the tribulations she may have faced in a society unfriendly to a single woman. She does re-enter marriage but as an equal

Two on the same piece of wreckage would stand a better chance than each on their own

**Her marriage is going to be different to the Helmers', and perhaps that is the point being made – marriage is not the evil, ungracious treatment of women within it is.**

Kristine Linde also serves a dramatic purpose. She enters as a friend and a **patient listener**, and triggers and listens to Nora's account of the loan and its repayment and **functions as an exposition would to the audience**. Apart from merely listening, she offers opinion and advice, warning her against flirting with Dr. Rank and asking other questions. Later she becomes part of the main action of the play when she **gets aware of the blackmail and persuades Krogstad not to go ahead with it. She is responsible for Krogstad's change of heart. She then ensures the letter reaches Torvald and thus becomes instrumental in the shattering of illusions** – Nora's about her husband – and the myth that the Helmers' marriage is an ideal one. **Kristine is averse to lies and evasion** and wishes the couple to face the truth and come to a genuine understanding. The result is **Nora's decision to leave and thus Kristine is responsible for this and the ending unconventional for its time.**

A major purpose the character serves is that of being a **contrast or a foil to the heroine, Nora**. Kristine gave up love for family, Nora chose love over family. Kristine overcomes difficulty and returns stronger to children and a marriage more truthful than Nora's. Nora is shaken out of her comfortable household life into leaving her children and a marriage based on deception. Kristine is worldly-wise if not world weary and sees life through her experiences of difficulty. Nora has had an easier life and retains her youthful impetuosity. Kristine herself observes, "You are still very like a child in many things, and I am older than you in many ways and have a little more experience."

**To Nora, Kristine is someone to look up to** – dedicated, courageous and battling odds in an unfriendly social milieu to make a living first for her family and then for herself. Nora draws courage from this and decides to face the world on her own to search for her individuality and dignity. Thus, Kristine Linde compels Nora, the 'doll' of Torvald's doll house, to give up her childish games with skylarks and squirrels and discover her true self.

## Question 10

Describe the scene at Frank's Chop House, highlighting the breakdown of Willy's relationship with his sons. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

The narration was well handled by several candidates but the breakdown of relationship did not get enough attention.

The subtlety of exchanges and the intensity of emotions did not emerge.

The aftermath of the incident, particularly Linda's anger, was ignored in many cases. In several cases, Happy's part was not dealt with.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Flat narration and mere summaries of intense scenes in a play indicate lack of involvement or critical understanding. Teachers should encourage discussion on what emerges from between the spoken lines and obvious actions.
- Link narrative / incident / event to character revelation, theme, plot, context in which play was written.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 10

Happy banters with the waiter, Stanley. Happy is flirting with a pretty girl named Miss Forsythe when Biff arrives to join him. After she responds to his pick-up line by claiming that she is, in fact, a cover girl, Happy tells her that he is a successful champagne salesman and that Biff is a famous football player. Judging from Happy's repeated comments on her moral character and his description of her as "on call," Miss Forsythe is probably a prostitute. Happy invites her to join them. She exits to make a phone call to cancel her previous plans and to invite a girlfriend to join them. Biff explains to Happy that he waited six hours to see Oliver, only to have Oliver not even remember him. Biff asks where he got the idea that he was a salesman for Oliver. He had actually been only a lowly shipping clerk, but somehow Willy's exaggerations and lies had transformed him into a salesman in the Loman family's collective memory. After Oliver and the secretary left, Biff recounts, he ran into Oliver's office and stole his fountain pen.

Happy advises Biff to tell Willy that Oliver is thinking over his business proposition, claiming that eventually the whole situation will fade from their father's memory. When Willy arrives, he reveals that he has been fired and states that he wants some good news to tell Linda. Despite this pressure, *Biff attempts to tell the truth. Disoriented, Willy shouts that Biff cannot blame everything on him because Biff is the one who failed math after all. Confused at his father's crazed emphasis on his high school math failure, Biff steels himself to forge ahead with the truth, but the situation reaches crisis proportions when Willy absolutely refuses to listen to Biff's story.* In a frenzy, as the perilous truth closes in on him, Willy enters a semi-daydream state, *reliving Biff's discovery of him and The Woman in their Boston hotel room. A desperate Biff backs down and begins to lie to assuage his frantic father.*

Miss Forsythe returns with her friend, Letta. *Willy, insulted at Biff's "spite," furiously lashes out at his son's attempts to explain himself and the impossibility of returning to Oliver.* Willy wanders into the restroom, talking to himself, and an embarrassed Happy informs the women that he is not, in fact, their father. Biff angrily tells Happy to help Willy, accusing him of not caring about their father. He hurries out of the restaurant in a vortex of guilt and anguish. Happy frantically asks Stanley for the bill; when the waiter doesn't respond immediately, Happy rushes after Biff, pushing Miss Forsythe and Letta along in front of him and leaving Willy babbling alone in the restroom. Both sons reach home to face Linda's fury at their having abandoned their father.

Willy's encounters with Howard, Bernard, and Charley constitute serious blows to the fantasy through which he views his life; **his constructed reality is falling apart.** Biff has also experienced a moment of truth, but he **regards his epiphany as a liberating experience from a lifetime of stifling and distorting lies.** *He wishes to leave behind the facade of the Loman family tradition so that he and his father can begin to relate to one another honestly. Willy, on the other hand, wants his sons to aid him in rebuilding the elaborate fantasies that deny his reality as a defeated man. Willy drives Biff to produce a falsely positive report of his interview with Oliver, and Happy is all too willing to comply.* When Biff fails to produce the expected glowing report, Happy, who has not had the same revelation as Biff, chimes in with false information about the interview.

Willy's greatest fear is realized during his ill-fated dinner with Biff and Happy. In his moment of weakness and defeat, he asks for their help in rebuilding his shattered concept of his life; he is not very likable, and he is well aware of it. *Biff and Happy's neglect of him fits into a pattern of abandonment. Like Willy's father, then Ben, then Howard, Biff and Happy erode Willy's fantasy world.* The scene in Frank's Chop House is pivotal to Willy's unravelling and to Biff's disillusionment. Biff's epiphany in Oliver's office regarding Willy's exaggeration of Biff's position at Oliver's store puts him on a quest to break through the thick cloud of lies surrounding his father at any cost. *Just as Willy refuses to hear what he doesn't want to accept, Biff refuses to subject himself further to his father's delusions.*

The name "Frank's Chop House" can be seen as a symbol for a number of things. First and foremost, it represents the idea of broken promises. The first broken promise is made by Biff and Happy to their father, for a nice dinner together at the restaurant. The audience sees that Happy and Biff abandoned Willy at the restaurant as the two leave with some girls. Frank Wagner makes the other broken promise, father of Howard Wager, the current head of Willy's sales agency. Frank had promised, in Willy's mind, Willy a job at the New York office, which never comes true.

Stanley is also the witness of the dysfunctional dynamics of the Lomans. While the Lomans try to show to the world an image of themselves that does not exist, Stanley witnesses in their actions the shallowness of Happy, the traumatic personality of Biff, and the mental instability of Willy. When the men engage in an argument, Biff leaves angrily while Happy drags the ladies with him going after Biff.

Willy, in the middle of a hallucinatory flashback is left at his own mercy back at the restaurant. Stanley is who comes to the rescue to look out for Willy. This is when Willy tries to give Stanley money that Stanley puts back on Willy's pocket. Then Willy asks Stanley whether he knows of a place that sells seeds. Stanley, without any judgment, directs Willy to a hardware store, and watches him go, making sure that Willy is alright.

Moreover, Stanley also ensures that Willy is left with a little bit of dignity, as he scolds a fellow waiter who had been staring at the entire situation with the Lomans. Stanley tells him

Well, watta you looking at!?



Therefore, Stanley represents the good Samaritan and also epitomizes the good American citizen. He is what every good citizen should be: a good man who listens, does not judge, does his job, and just looks out for others. He is the only man in the restaurant who gives Willy respect, and care. He even looks out for Willy's dignity.

*[Relevant quotes to be included]*

## Question 11

Write short notes on:

[20]

- (a) The seeds and carpentry as symbols.
- (b) The significance of the stockings and the rubber hose.

### Comments of Examiners

'Seeds' were well discussed by many candidates while 'carpentry' was not. Many failed to provide examples of Willy's carpentry skills and mention the link to Willy's father. The futility of planting seeds at that point was not brought out by many.

Part (b) was also incomplete: while stockings found adequate attention, rubber hose was ignored. Willy's suicidal tendency was mentioned but the anxiety of Linda and Biff left out. A point brought out in some cases was the irony of Willy being killed by the very comforts he was struggling to provide his family with.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Symbolism is a key aspect of literary study and students should be taught to draw and analyze underlying ideas. Critical discussion must be a part of literature classes.
- When the question itself makes a separation of symbols, the answer should be structured to address each symbol independently and clearly. In a general question on symbols, clubbing can be done.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 11

- (a) **Seeds** Willy plants seeds the day his failure stares him in the face. Willy wants to present the worth of his labour; very tellingly he plants them in the night, symbolising his shame and sense of failure as provider and father. "I don't have a thing in the ground!" Willy laments. The sons he has cultivated with his own values have grown to disappoint him, none of his financial hopes have borne fruit, and he is desperate to have some tangible result of a life time of work. **By planting vegetable seeds, he is attempting to reconnect with nature, to create something tangible.** However, as Linda gently reminds him, the surrounding buildings don't provide enough light for a garden. Willy's attempt to plant the vegetable seeds at night further reinforces the futility of his efforts. **The optimism implying his hope that he can make seeds grow is only temporary. It is a futile effort because the earth is hard and there is insufficient light.**

	<p><b>Carpentry</b> is the one thing that Willy is actually good at, but <b>he never appreciates it, and instead chases constantly after the wrong dream.</b> He is proud of his skills, shows them off and wants to share them with his sons: “We're gonna rebuild the entire front stoop right now! Watch this, Ben!”, “Did you see the ceiling I put up in the living room?” <b>They have a far more personal feel than his selling; Linda points out, “There's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made.”</b> Indeed, he feels strongly about it: “A man who can't handle tools is not a man. You're disgusting.” It perhaps <b>relates back to his father</b>, who is revered by Willy and Ben as a great man and inventor.</p>
(b)	<p><b>Stockings</b> refer to Biff’s discovery of Willy and The Woman in their Boston hotel room. The teenage Biff accuses Willy, “You gave her Mama’s stockings!” Stockings thus <b>signify betrayal and sexual infidelity</b> since he presented the other woman the intimate gift of stockings, leaving his wife to mend her old stockings. He knows he has let his wife down emotionally. His sudden reaction to the sight of his wife mending stockings - “Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I am in the house. It gets me nervous”- signifies his guilt and accentuated sense of failure particularly as a husband. <b>New stockings are important for both Willy’s pride in being financially successful and thus able to provide for his family and for Willy’s ability to ease his guilt about, and suppress the memory of, his betrayal of Linda and Biff.</b> Linda’s constantly mending stockings <b>reinforces her drab life.</b></p> <p><b>The rubber hose</b> signifies <b>Willy’s desperate attempts at suicide.</b> He has apparently attempted to kill himself by inhaling gas. Literal death by inhaling gas is often seen as parallel to the metaphorical death that Willy feels in his struggle to afford basic necessities. Linda finds it hidden behind the fuse box in the cellar. Like Willy's other attempted method of suicide—driving off the road in the car he uses to travel to work—the rubber hose points how the conveniences such as the car and water heater that Willy works so hard to buy to afford might, under their surface, be killing him. The rubber hose is what Linda shows her sons to drive home the true horror of Willy’s imminent collapse, and Biff finally confronts him with it.</p>

## Question 12

In *Death of a Salesman*, what delusion and mistaken beliefs did Willy Loman harbour? Why did he choose to end his life? [20]



## Comments of Examiners

Even in cases where Willy's mistaken beliefs were addressed well, reasons for suicide were not complete. The insurance money was presented but his joy at Biff's love and desire to leave something for his family were either ignored or inadequately brought out.

In many cases, candidates gave a character sketch of Willy rather than distinctly bring out his delusions and beliefs.

Main delusions left out: missing out that Ben had to work hard too, own business, Biff's scholarship, repaying Charley, Bill Oliver lending Biff the money.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Motivation of characters must be a part of character study. Narration and dialogue must be used to arrive at a fuller understanding of character.
- Answers should clearly address the focus of question rather than depend on the examiner's ability to draw assumptions and fish out points.
- The insurance must be discussed – practical aspect and possible futility of suicide to get insurance money.
- This was clearly a two-part question. Both aspects had to be addressed.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 12

Miller explores the American Dream through his protagonist. Essentially decent, Willy Loman is a victim of his own **delusions and misguided aims**. **His belief in the importance of being “well liked” is one such instance**, which takes precedence over living by hard work and a prudent handling of reality, also facets of pursuing the American Dream. **He tells himself and his family that he is a successful salesman and highly regarded by the Wagners and outside New York**. He claims he is “vital in New England”, so welcome that people will “be open sesame for us” there and the cops protect his car like their own. The lie of this belief is revealed with Howard Wagner dismisses him from work without any qualms, making it clear Willy has never been an esteemed employee, and Willy has no mourners at his funeral.

Willy feels that being “**well liked**” is **the best route to success**. **He dismisses Charley's more solid standing** by saying, “Because Charley is not — liked. He's liked, but he's not — well liked.” Biff echoes this about Bernard when the latter comes to warn him to study. Willy tells Biff that **getting more marks in school does not mean being a success in the business world, because it is the “man who creates personal interest” that gets ahead in business**. Willy thanks God that his sons are “built like Adonises.” His **ideal is Dave Singleman**, “remembered and loved and helped by so many different people”. Rather than note his exhausting and lonely life and death, Willy is impressed by the crowds at his funeral, signifying how liked he had been. In fact, he dreams of his own funeral as “massive” with mourners coming from across the country with “strange license plates”. He **laments before Howard Wagner that in the present there is no “friendship” or “personality”** in the line.

He clings to the **belief that anyone attractive can achieve success**. A major part of his annoyance with Biff is that in his eyes Biff is not settled successfully despite high school popularity and attractiveness. He is nonplussed and frustrated because his own son is not proof of his belief:

Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man with such—personal attractiveness, gets lost.

**He passes on this idea to his sons, particularly Happy**, who is more like Willy than Biff is. Happy tells his brother that he will not lack backing because, “You’re well liked, Biff.” He is also impressed by his brother **Ben, whom he places on a pedestal, not for his hard work and gruelling life** but only for the thrill of starting “with the clothes on his back” and ending up with diamond mines. He thinks it was simple – “What’s the mystery? The man knew what he wanted and went out and got it!”

When the boys are younger, instead of instilling sounder values in them **Willy turns a blind eye to Biff’s serious misdemeanours**. When Biff steals a football, Willy agrees that it will be seen as his “initiative” worthy of praise. Willy says this is because the coach “likes” Biff – for anybody else there would be an “uproar”. It is as if Willy is teaching his sons that **being liked will pardon even stealing**. Putting being liked as a supreme virtue leads to Biff’s becoming an inveterate pilferer. The boys also **do not respect women**. As adults, they share coarse comments on the women in their lives; they have never learnt otherwise since Willy dismissed their roughness with women even when Linda tried to teach them otherwise. Willy advises Biff, “Just wanna be careful with those girls, Biff, that’s all. Don’t make any promises.”

Willy for years has been living in his own world, quite disconnected from the truth of his circumstances. He tells his children that someday **he is going to have his own business** and never have to travel. He believes he is “**building something with the firm**.” He is convinced **Biff is going to get into the University of Virginia and has scholarships to three universities**, completely unaccepting of the fact that first Biff has to pass, graduate and work hard:

... because it is not what you do, Ben. It’s who you know and the smile on your face! It’s contacts, Ben, contacts!... a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked!

Willy borrows fifty dollars from Charley and tells Linda that is his commission. He professes he did five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston. When Linda excitedly calculates his commission, he brings the figures down and claims some stores were closed “**Otherwise I woulda broke records**.” He agonises at the expenses lined up and that if business did not “pick up” it would be difficult. His optimism is back when he promises to “knock ‘em dead next week”. Howard Wagner denies that Willy ever **averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions** as he claims. It is **only before Linda that Willy faces the truth** – “people don’t seem to take to me.” He realises he has to work harder than others for the same earnings, and he longs for the respect that Charley has. On instances such as this, **Linda is guilty of furthering his delusions** by covering for his shortcomings – to her Willy is “lively” and “the handsomest man in the world...”

*[Other points that can be given credit: borrowing money from Charley, implying the hope he would be able to repay; Oliver would give Biff a job, insurance would help his family]*

*Why Willy killed himself:*

Seeing tears in Biff’s eyes, Willy was overcome by the **thought that Biff loved him**. The pain of years of friction and aloofness was washed away and Willy was even **more determined to do something for his family, Biff in particular**. He had recently been forced to face his own guilt,

despite denial, by his conversation with Bernard and his memory of the Boston hotel scene. **That guilt probably heightened his desire to achieve something, to leave a legacy for his sons.** This desire is symbolised in his act of planting the seeds.

Having been fired by Howard and turned down Charley's offer, the only source **Willy can think of is the insurance money.** As it is he has been contemplating suicide – the rubber pipe and the car swerving of the road are signs of that – and the final act of actual suicide to him is the only solution.

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

### Question 13

Critically examine the poem *Wild Oats* by Philip Larkin.

[20]

#### Comments of Examiners

In some cases, critical analysis was not done correctly – narration of what happened was excellent but analysis was missing.

In many answers, imagery, language and tone did not get much attention. Larkin's personal outlook was not mentioned.

Errors such as 'rose blossoms' instead of 'bosomy English rose' were observed.

The significance of title was sometimes not clearly addressed.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- Critical analysis must be a specific kind of assignment done in class. Context, explanation of what lines say, basic style and technique and theme must be analyzed together as contributing factors to a poem.
- Teachers must refer to syllabus for concepts students must know and terms they must use in critical analysis.
- Titles of all works need a separate discussion in class.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 13

The **title 'Wild Oats' comes from a common euphemism for sex: "sow your wild oats".** It was an encouragement for men to sleep around prior to getting married whilst women were told to remain chaste. This is ironic in that Larkin details only a rather mild flirtation instead of any promiscuity. Larkin's poem is based upon the only woman Larkin came close to marriage with: **his first girlfriend Ruth Bowman. She had a friend called Jane, who is the model for the "bosomy English rose", while sixteen-year-old Ruth was "her friend in specs I could talk to".**

Two **stereotypical images of women** appear in the poem- the "bosomy English rose" and "her friend in specs". Larkin reduces the women to stereotypes and **objectifies** them. Whilst the "English rose" (based on Jane Exall) was exceedingly pretty, pale and what would be thought to be typically more attractive, the friend (Ruth Bowman) is described in an unflattering manner. However, the friend is easier to "talk to" and makes Larkin more comfortable while the **symbolic "rose" represents unattainable beauty and sexuality** and for this reason, Larkin started a relationship with the attainable friend instead-ironic. This raises the debate of love versus lust as it appears that the feelings faces "sparked" were based entirely on appearance and Larkin seems to aim for women above his level.

Over time, Larkin's relationship with the friend progresses but is cut off when he is given back the "ten-guinea ring", suggesting a broken engagement. The relationship also seems distant and Larkin cannot help but think of the two times he met "beautiful". These meetings are particularly memorable for Larkin and most likely allude to the lunch dates Larkin shared with Jane in Leicester and Shrewsbury. However, his uncertainty and low self-confidence are displayed when he believes that both times she was trying "not to laugh". He cannot help but think that a woman like her will be mocking him.

Either way, it is clear to see why the "seven" year engagement between Larkin and Ruth Bowman ended if Larkin was so distracted by communicating with Jane. In the end, an "agreement" is reached, suggesting a mutual business contract and alluding to the idea that there were no feelings present in the relationship, only lust. Larkin acknowledges that he does not have the right character traits for the relationship and is "selfish, withdrawn, and easily bored".

The **colloquial language** used throughout the poem and the **flippant tone** highlight that Larkin was dismissive of his relationship with Ruth. He merely states that it was "useful to get that learnt" and to move on with his life, implying that the relationship was just an education-purely learning, not feeling.

Even though the poem is a reflection on the past, Larkin still has "two snaps" of Jane in his wallet which are described as "unlucky charms". This **sarcastic and trivial end note** reaches the conclusion that the persona is still single because he kept the photos and it could be argued that this is a portrayal of the fact that nothing will ever match up to Larkin's high standards of the "English rose"-the unrealised fantasy outlives the real affair. Yet, the light-hearted conclusion is discredited by the last word "perhaps", implying that there is a darker, more serious reason for Larkin's lonely existence. The poem ends, like so many others, on a **miserable and depressing note** and suggests that love can never match its expectations.

**Imagery** appears in *Wild Oats* when describing the women as a "rose" as roses are often viewed as fragile but beautiful and sensual also. Larkin uses **very little rhyme** in the poem (e.g. "out" and "doubt") and few poetic techniques so as to create a **personal and intimate conversational piece**. **Enjambment** also appears to show the rush of feelings when describing Jane Exall.

The persona in the poem is assumed to be Larkin himself. He is narrating **an incident from his life**. In this poem, Larkin appears to feel inferior and unconfident of himself from the start. Many critics also say that Larkin reveals himself as a **misogynist** in the poem *Wild Oats*, as he writes about women as things to desire. As much as he tries (initially, at least) to resist the beautiful "bosomy rose," he cannot, as in her, he sees an object that will satisfy his needs, as well as an object that is gratifying to look at. Larkin concludes that the photographs of the beautiful woman in his wallet may be "Unlucky charms," as they constantly reminded him that he would succumb to the beauty of the woman, and not be rebellious in this aspect, try as he may. The photographs are also unlucky because he knows that the woman is unattainable to him, yet he continues to relentlessly pursue her and think about her. He

realizes that the photographs serve him no purpose but to remind him of his shortcomings, which is why they are unlucky.

The last word of the poem ("perhaps") leaves the reader with an uncertain feel. It implies that Larkin is unsure about his feelings and about the effect that the beautiful woman has on him. We can therefore conclude that the poem *Wild Oats* is one about social norms and propaganda, and how Larkin is constantly trying to rebel against them, yet he finds this quite hard. He uses an example of having to choose between two women; one very beautiful, and one less beautiful, and how (once he has made his decision of romancing the less beautiful one), he is unable to resist the more beautiful woman. This symbolizes Larkin's struggles with resisting the tendency to conform to society's guidelines and expectations, and exposes Larkin for the slightly insecure and unconfident person he is.

*[Relevant quotes to be included. Credit given for heightened analysis if adequately justified.]*

## Question 14

Analyse W.H. Auden's *Refugee Blues* as a touching account of a social and political problem [20] from his times, which is as relevant today.

### Comments of Examiners

Narration of what the lines said was well done by a number of candidates.

Some candidates could not bring out the relevance of the poem in current times despite the contemporary discussion on refugees. However, there were a few who were able to write good answers, incorporating both an explanation of the poem, its context and its relevance today with specific reference to modern-day issues.

Some candidates could not clearly give the themes of displacement and lack of welcome, nor could they explain the title.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Part of class discussion must be on the universal relevance of the text being taught. Students must be able to link literature with real life, political, social and essential human nature. Teachers should discourage isolated rote learning of poetry explanation.
- Relevance to 'today' needs specific mention of issues – not necessarily detailed discussion - rather than a general statement that the poem continues to be relevant today.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 14

This is a poem about the plight of a specific group of refugees displaced and arriving in a country that is generally hostile to their situation, even if well-meaning. Auden focuses on the **German Jews arriving** in the US at that time, though the poem has taken in a timeless quality due to the commonality of its subject. Indeed, it is not until stanza 8 that Auden identifies his refugees. Possibly he is trying to show the reluctance of the persecuted to identify themselves for fear of further persecution, possibly

he is allowing the narrator – to present the key ideas of his poem without the idea of Jewishness in some way getting the way of a universal message. He has chosen the title *Refugee Blues* to link to the protest and subculture of the enslaved Blacks, who developed this **musical form** in the Southern USA, and has written a poem in which the rhythm and rhyme scheme (AAB) reflects the musical style. This is another way of linking the fate of the Jews with a more universal theme of suffering. The “Blues” of this title is a **pun** referring to the musical form and despondency.

There is a wide range of powerful imagery used to build up the overall picture. In the opening line, the choice of the word “souls” is important since it not only suggests a religious or sacred connotation, but also serves to remove barriers between peoples – all are souls whether in “mansions” or “holes”. Auden points out the artificial nature of human segregation here. He refers to a Yew tree in stanza 3, but also setting up, by means of the reference to the Spring blossoms, an idea of hope for the future which must be allowed to permeate this poem, negative though it is. The tree is carried into the reference in the next line to “old passports” which suggests that hope may not actually exist for all the people of the world. Auden uses pathetic fallacy in stanzas in stanzas 7 and 10 with great effect. Hitler’s speeches are metaphorically linked with thunder and therefore with threat and destructive power and in the final stanza the snow serves to provide chill and a bleaching of emotion to accompany the remarkable prediction of the events in Russia some years later.

In a huge population of “ten million souls” of varying wealth and status, the refugees **have no “peace”** neither mansion nor hold. The social and political element comes through in “**Once we had a country**” and the detachment eternally and in tone of it now being just in an atlas, denied to them. Yew trees can blossom but their **passports cannot be renewed** and without passports even the consul of a friendly country considers them “officially dead”, bureaucracy denying their physical state of being alive. The committee for them is polite but overrun and cannot help refugees soon. An insecure host society is worried about jobs and “**daily bread**” being taken away. The fear of persecution back home, symbolised by the “thunder” of **Hitler** in Europe, keeps them here.

**Poodles and cats** get more warmth and welcome than the German Jews. **Fish** in the harbour, a mere “ten feet away”, swim freely and **birds** are at ease, chirping away.

Auden here passes a critical comment on **politicians** and “the human race”: animals are both better and better off than humans.

Refugees yearn for a home but cannot get one – **not a single space** or corner is theirs while hostile soldiers back home are searching for them.

This poem from *Another Time* (1940) brings out the tragic predicament of German Jews being forced to escape their homes as Hitler rose to power and finding no comfort in countries in which they sought refuge. The repeated “my dear” is sad and helpless as well as a jibe at human compassion.

*Specific references to contemporary times to bring out relevance “today”.*

*[Relevant quotes to be included. Heightened analysis given credit if adequately justified.]*



## Question 15

Edward Thomas explores a number of related themes in *The Signpost*. Discuss these in the light of your understanding of the poem. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

Not many candidates attempted this question. Many of those who did, did not discuss the themes fully.

Many wrote that the poem was an affirmation of poet's love for life on earth and his desire to come back to life. Analysis of optimism was carefully considered and accepted only if justified and supported by understanding or interpretation of text.

Many ignored Thomas's personal situation as a context for the dialogue in the poem before expressing an opinion and presenting an interpretation. The Robert Frost connection was overlooked by many candidates.

A number of answers reflected confusion of thought and were rambling and repetitive.

### Suggestion for teachers

Opinion-based answers must be justified with relevance to text of poem and poet's life and beliefs. For instance, Thomas's thoughts on perfection of happiness or heaven did not find mention to prove interpretation one way or another.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 15

*The Signpost* (7 December 1914): **Frost's "Road Not Taken" a parody of Thomas** and his hesitant personality – in Gloucestershire in 1914, Frost and Thomas would take long walks – after choosing a path, Thomas would regret the choice and sigh over what he might have shown Frost if they had taken a 'better' path – in Frost's poem "sigh" is an ironical implication that no real difference is at stake.

Edward Thomas's poem *The Signpost* explores a number of related themes, including those of life and death, youth and age, and decision and indecision. The poem opens by describing a wintry seascape, thereby establishing the idea of the passage of time. Seascapes represent spring or summer, not winter, but this poem reminds us that even the sea and beaches are overcome by the kind of death associated with winter.

**Choice of literal path and moral path (choice between enlisting and going to America)** – excessive deliberation or retrospection – echo of folk-tales in which travellers fatefully choose road, the poem gives Thomas's poetic journey "in after himself an archetypal starting point" – hint at **personal tumult** and clinical depression that he suffered from

[Explanation of poem must cover– scene, description, signpost, two voices, hint of troubled years, heaven, return to point – flawed heaven – no decision]

**Scene:** wintry, dull – sea is dim – chill – weeds – frost on grass – long grass, rough – tuft of traveller's joy over hawthorn berry and hazel – at the hilltop, a finger-post – as the dialogue progresses, a hazel leaf drops down – the setting enhances the mood of the poem

I read the sign. Which way shall I go?

The **voices** – one reminds poet he would not have hesitated at the younger age of twenty – a second



voice sparks off the dialogue – scornfully reminds him that at twenty he wished he had “never been born”- the first voice wishes to know what it would be like to be sixty and faced with the same choice – the second voice is amused, bitterly – poet joins the laughter

The message conveyed is whatever happens or befalls the inevitability is the “mouthful of earth” to end a life that may be full of regrets or aspirations – the end of life may itself be marked by regrets and aspirations as if in judgement – one may wish for heaven and indeed attain it but there is a possibility that it is not as expected – there may be “a flaw in that heaven”

At that point, the person may wish to retrace steps to the point when the choice had to be made – indecisiveness out of the fear of what might be or there may have been a better choice, and such regret and wishes could afflict anyone rich or poor, at “any age between death and birth”, at any time or season and at any place on land or in the sea – the difficulty of making choice is true for all.

The poem **ends** with a note of anguish as the poet’s inner voice brings out the agonising over a choice and not arriving at one till that point – the image of someone standing at that signpost and

Wondering where he shall journey, O where?

In his diary Thomas wrote life without death, decay, weariness or regret cannot be easily imagined by earthly men, and that **perfect happiness even if possible would be dull** – it would be refused by many because it wipes out the “desire and conscious memory of the earth” - he often referred to Wordsworth's belief that the world or the earth is where we find our happiness or not at all – lines 21-29 indicate homesickness for earth - by the end, in coming to a full circle, the **poem confirms a preference for earthly doubts over heavenly answers** - a use of narrative and of different voices which releases the imagination and leads towards a **dialogue of different parts of the self**.

*[Relevant quotes to be included. Credit given for heightened analysis if adequately justified.]*

# GENERAL COMMENTS

## Topics found difficult by candidates

- Study of character and role
- Critical analysis – answers requiring critical thinking and opinion
- Specific, focused questions
- Symbolism of event
- Theme of poem in context of poet's personal life and beliefs

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## Concepts in which candidates got confused

- Role
- Theme – especially theme reflected in the actions and choices of characters
- Relevance and context
- Distinct symbols
- Connecting parts to the whole work and context

## Suggestions for candidates

- The basis of study should be text and classroom discussion rather than watered down essays on the internet
- Practice in writing answers of different kinds is essential
- Relevant and accurate quotes are necessary
- Introduction should be related to the question and should be concise
- Understanding the focus of the question is imperative – careful reading of the question will help
- Structure and coherence of answers must be paid heed to
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation rules must be followed
- Write in paragraphs
- Use a mix of study tools to gain clarity and structure for analysis (self-study notes under sub-headings, mind maps, flow charts)