

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL AS LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE

(9675)

Unit 2: Place in literary texts

Example responses with commentary

For teaching from September 2016 onwards

For A-level exams in May/June 2018 onwards

This guide includes questions from the summer 2018 AS-level English Literature (9675) LT02 exam with some example student responses and commentary.

It is intended to provide examples of genuine responses submitted in the exam, with some exemplification of the mark scheme and an examiner commentary connected to that response.

The Assessment Objectives and their significance

12. All questions are framed to test AOs 1 and 2 so if candidates answer the question, then they will be addressing the AOs. In marking questions, however, examiners must also take account of AO3, which tests more than technical accuracy.

The equally weighted AOs are as follows:

AO1: Demonstrate understanding of the ways in which readers find meanings in texts, showing an understanding of genre, the significance of contexts, and the ways in which different interpretations can be found.

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts with close attention to authorial methods.

AO3: Express informed, personal and argued responses to literary texts, using appropriate concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate writing.

Mark scheme

It is important to remember that these students, in the main, are 17 years old so we are judging their skills halfway through Key Stage 5.

GENERIC MARK SCHEME

	AO	Typical features	How to arrive at mark
Band 5 Perceptive/Assured 21-25 marks ‘Perception’ is demonstrated when students are showing the depth of their understanding and responding sensitively to the texts and task. ‘Assuredness’ is shown when students write with confidence and conviction.	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> perceptive understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task assuredness in the connection between contexts and genre, leading to perceptive interpretations 	<p>This band is characterised by perceptive and assured work which shows confidence, sharpness of mind and sophistication in relation to the task.</p> <p>At the top of the band students are consistently assured and will demonstrate sensitivity and perception across all three assessment objectives in the course of their response.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band there will be coherence and accuracy with some perception but with less consistency and evenness.</p>
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> perceptive understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task assured engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used 	
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> perceptive, assured and sophisticated argument in relation to the task assured use of literary critical concepts and terminology; mature and impressive expression 	
Band 4 Coherent/Thorough 16-20 marks ‘Coherence’ is shown when students are logical and consistent in their arguments in relation to the task. They hold their ideas together in an intelligible way. ‘Thoroughness’ is shown when students write carefully and precisely with detail.	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> thorough understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task coherence in the connection between contexts and genre, leading to carefully explained interpretations 	<p>This band is characterised by coherent and thorough work where ideas are linked together in a focused and purposeful way in relation to the task.</p> <p>At the top of the band students will demonstrate a fully coherent and thorough argument across all three assessment objectives in the course of their response.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band ideas will be discussed in a shaped, relevant and purposeful way with a clear sense of direction, with one or two lapses in coherence and accuracy.</p>
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> thorough understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task thorough engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used 	
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> logical, thorough and coherent argument in relation to the task where ideas are debated in depth appropriate use of literary critical concepts and terminology; precise and accurate expression 	

Band 3 Straightforward/ Relevant 11-15 marks 'Straightforward' work is shown when students make their ideas in relation to the task clearly known. 'Relevant' work is shown when students are focused on the task and use detail in an appropriate and supportive way.	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> straightforward understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task relevant in the connection between contexts and genre, leading to straightforward interpretations 	<p>This band is characterised by straightforward and relevant work where the student's response to the task is clear and intelligible.</p> <p>At the top of the band students will demonstrate consistent straightforward understanding in the course of their argument. Ideas will be developed relevantly.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band there will be flashes of relevant understanding with evidence of straightforward thinking.</p>
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> straightforward understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task relevant engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used 	
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sensibly ordered ideas in a relevant argument in relation to the task some use of literary critical concepts and terminology which are mainly appropriate; straightforward and clear expression 	
Band 2 Simple/Generalised 6-10 marks 'Simple' work is shown when students write in an unelaborated and basic way in relation to the task. 'Generalised' work is shown when students write without regard to particular details.	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> simple understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task generalised in the connections between contexts and genre, leading to simple interpretations 	<p>This band is characterised by simple and generalised work which is mainly linked to the task.</p> <p>At the top of the band students will demonstrate a basic generalised understanding in the course of their answer. Ideas will be developed in a simple way.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band there will be inconsistency, but the beginnings of a simple and generalised understanding.</p>
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> simple understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task generalised engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used 	
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a simple structure to the argument which may not be consistent but which does relate to the task generalised use of literary critical concepts and terminology; simple expression 	

<p>Band 1 Largely irrelevant/largely misunderstood/largely inaccurate 1-5 marks</p> <p>‘Largely irrelevant’ work is shown when students write in an unclear way with only occasional reference to what is required by the question.</p> <p>‘Largely misunderstood’ and ‘largely inaccurate’ work is shown when knowledge of the text is insecure, hazy and often wrong.</p>	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> little sense of the AOs in relation to the task; little sense of how meanings are shaped; little sense of any relevant contexts, genre or interpretations 	<p>This band is characterised by work which is largely irrelevant and largely misunderstood and largely inaccurate, and so unlikely to be addressing the AOs in a relevant way.</p> <p>At the top of the band students will mention some unconnected points in relation to the task during the course of their writing. The writing is likely to lack clarity.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band there will be no connection with the task; the writing will be hard to follow and irrelevant.</p>
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the writing is likely to be unclear and incorrect; if it is accurate the content will be irrelevant 	
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some vague points in relation to the task and some ideas about task and text(s) 	
0 marks		No marks for response when nothing is written or where response has no connection to the text(s) or task.	

SECTION A

QUESTION 2

Section A: Prose

Answer **one** question from this section.

0	2
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F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

Consider the significance of East Egg and West Egg as settings in *The Great Gatsby*.

[25 marks]

MARK SCHEME

Some possible content is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but as 'significance' relates to contextual, structural, linguistic and interpretative issues some strands listed could easily address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *The Great Gatsby* through the lens of **place**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

AO1: Demonstrate understanding of the ways in which readers find meanings in texts, showing an understanding of genre, the significance of contexts, and the ways in which different interpretations can be found.

Focus might be on:

- wealth, particularly difference between Buchanans and Gatsby
- class
- snobbery
- West Egg setting for Gatsby's parties: eg extravagance, self indulgence, vulgarity
- separation of two Eggs – Gatsby reaching across the divide
- different houses and what they reveal about their occupants
- contrast with Valley of Ashes
- links with New York.

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts with close attention to authorial methods.

With respect to significance of prose fiction methods:

- setting for some key events: eg reunion of Daisy and Gatsby, death of Gatsby
- implications of names
- symbolism of separation: eg Gatsby reaching across dark water, class, status
- use of different houses
- presentation of American Dream through property, possessions, different attitudes and values of East and West
- description: eg gardens, time of day, weather, geographical features
- use of the Eggs as a structural device.

Given that this is an **open book** exam, references to the novel should be detailed and accurate.

AO3: Express informed, personal and argued responses to literary texts, using appropriate concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate writing.

With respect to skill in writing:

- quality of relevant argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of concepts and terminology appropriate to the question
- technical accuracy.

Accept any valid discussion of prose fiction method, any valid interpretations and any valid discussion of contexts of production and reception which relate to the whole novel.

STUDENT A

Fitzgerald uses the fictional settings of West and East Egg so that they have within them considerable significance in the narrative. A high concentration of the wealthy elite reside in them, as both eggs are associated with high social class and lavish lifestyles. However, there are important differences between them. Despite the eggs being depicted as 'identical', in terms of their class East Egg holds a more gracious reputation than West Egg. The eggs are also used as settings in the representing of a lack of moral values in the, as these are characterised by their inhabitants.

The East Egg represents Old Money as its residents belong to families that have a history of being rich. Daisy and Tom Buchanan have both been privileged throughout their lives as they were born to extreme wealth. They reside in this egg as well as other millionaires and have high status because of their money and family background. On the other hand, Gatsby, who has acquired a gargantuan sum of wealth resides in West Egg, which is depicted with less social value as being the 'less fashionable of the two'.

Nick states that he lives on 'the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the sound', which is 'squeezed between two huge places'. Fitzgerald is using this to show Nick is not wealthy and so a sort of outsider, which fits with him being the observer of events in the story. Gatsby is Nick's neighbour who is seen by him at night looking across 'courtesy bay' at the green light at the end of the Buchanans' dock. The separation of the eggs by the water that Gatsby looks across is a physical barrier that acts as a metaphorical barrier between Gatsby and his beloved Daisy who is associated with the green light. After he met her Gatsby has spent his entire life in the pursuit of Daisy for half a decade. Once he finally resides near here and seemingly is close to her he is frustratingly not close enough. Due to the body of water that separates the eggs. However, at night when Gatsby sees the green light it serves as a beacon to guide him to Daisy and he 'reaches out' to it to show determination to overcome the barrier that the bay represents.

Oddly, Nick describes the eggs as 'one of the strangest communities in North America'. This description seems strange at first, since the eggs seem like the epitome of a luxury lifestyle in America where those who embody the American Dream, such as Gatsby in a house that is 'a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville', reside in West Egg and the new generations of historically privileged families such as the Buchanans in their 'red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion' reside in the East Egg. The contrast between these houses clearly shows the difference between New Money and Old Money. While both eggs seem to offer a tempting and enticing lifestyle, the 'superficial' description is delegitimised when it becomes apparent how morally corrupt the residents are. With the exception of Nick, the residents and visitors we know best have committed some sort of immoral or corrupt act. Tom has been involved in dubious activities in Chicago as well as having multiple affairs, Jordan Baker has cheated in one of her golf matches, Gatsby acquires his wealth through criminal activities and Daisy commits actual murder and is never caught. In a way the people of both eggs are similar and relate in this morbid way.

We see that the seemingly perfect communities in the eggs are tainted with the wrongdoings of the citizens. This is reflected in the physical structure of the eggs; though they are 'identical in contour' this does not create the implications they are ideal as 'they are not perfect ovals'. Just as the lavish lives the people live in these eggs shouldn't create the impression that because they are wealthy and materialistically fulfilled this does not automatically reflect that they are morally fulfilled too as they are not at all 'perfect'.

The idea of superficiality can be applied to both eggs and their communities. Many of the characters are shown to be shallow. Gatsby's parties attracted many people, but 'nobody came' to his funeral. Gatsby loved Daisy more than anything else and was ready to be blamed for the death of Myrtle, but Daisy did not go to his funeral. This kind of shallowness is again depicted physically by the eggs as they 'are both crushed flat'. This shape reflects the people who lack deep thought and consciences.

The East Egg is characterised by its 'white palaces'. White is often seen as the colour of purity. It is a colour that Daisy, who resides in East Egg, shows of in her dress when Nick meets her for the first time in the story. The window in the Buchanans' house were 'gleaming white'. Even Jordan Baker is adorned in the same colour, and both her and Daisy's dresses were 'rippling and fluttering'. This with the continuous mention of the colour white in East Egg may seem to have connotations of angelic features and purity, but this is ironic. In contrast it becomes apparent, especially after Daisy's murder of Myrtle, that perhaps the colour white represents the void in the inhabitants of East Egg who seem to be devoid of any morals.

The specific use of the word 'eggs' serves as a metaphorical description of how the communities in both eggs are protected from other social classes. Eggs in the literal sense have shells, and the residents of the eggs use the 'shell' of their sheltered communities to remain self absorbed and protected from the outside world. In contrast the valley of ashes represents those who failed in their pursuit of the American Dream. The death of Myrtle shows this failure and Daisy can return to the protection of her wealthy home where she seen with Tom, and Nick comments: 'anybody would have said that they were conspiring together'. This shows how they are able to avoid responsibility.

However, egg shells can be easily broken. After Tom tells Wilson that Gatsby was driving the car that killed Myrtle, he becomes an 'ashen fantastic figure' who murders Gatsby in his swimming pool before killing himself. The 'holocaust', the sacrifice of three lives, 'was complete' in West Egg. Class differences make the Wilsons and Gatsby victims, while the richest from East Egg escape justice.

Overall, Fitzgerald cleverly chooses to name the setting where the main characters reside as 'eggs'. He connects the physical features of the eggs and their metaphorical connotations with the communities within them. Ultimately the eggs become a significant symbol and more than just a setting in the story as they show the values of the people within them and implicitly reflect them, mostly in the figurative aspect.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

While there is some unevenness and the level of achievement not always entirely consistent with the top band, there is assurance in the approach and perception in the way in which features of the settings are used to develop meanings. The sustained focus on both eggs is very effective.

AO1: There is assurance in the understanding of social class in relation to setting, particularly in terms of wealth. Sharpness in the use of the lens of place is evident. Consistently clear connections between aspects of 1920s culture as Fitzgerald portrays it and place as a cultural genre are made. Though the comments in the second paragraph could be more detailed and supported, the fourth and fifth paragraphs are examples of how ideas are developed by bringing in AO2 comments

AO2: A focus on the authorial use of the eggs is maintained from the introductory paragraph. Fitzgerald's use of topographical features is subject to assured analysis and, for example, perceptive points are made in the range of comments on the implications of the use of the term 'eggs' in the antepenultimate and penultimate paragraphs. There is further evidence of assured engagement with how meanings are shaped in the exploration of several examples of the use of 'white'.

AO3: The argument is persuasive in its structured shape and precise in its focus. Overall, this is a sophisticated response from a seventeen year old, who uses appropriate terminology with assurance.

Overall, this response is consistent with the Band 5 descriptors of perceptive and assured.

STUDENT B

The Great Gatsby has a huge segregation between the West and the East Egg. The East Egg is full of Aristocrats and the 'Old money' whilst the west egg is full of self made-newly rich 'new money'. There is a major class difference which ultimately leads to Gatsby, Myrtle and George Wilson's death.

One of the most important moments of the novel was when Tom called Gatsby a 'nobody from nowhere' Fitzgerald has used this to convey the major segregation of classes between the 'eggs'. Gatsby is the epitome of the 'American Dream' who has worked hard in order to have such a 'lavish' mansion yet demeans Gatsby due to his West egg location which further proves the idea of no matter how hard and how successful Gatsby is, he will never be looked in the same way as Tom due to the segregation between East and west egg.

Ultimately the clash of the two eggs contradict the idea of the 'American Dream' as Fitzgerald conveys the idea of lack of life. Furthermore, East and West egg are significant as they are the barriers of love between Daisy and Gatsby. Daisy explicitly said she is 'appalled' by the 'West egg' which is what blocks their love from happening. Despite Gatsby's adoration to his lust for Daisy as he was seen looking at the 'green light' his opulent parties aren't able to win Daisy over to the 'unprecedented' West Egg. Further proving how East and West egg are what prevent love, due to his idea of East egg being of higher class.

The valley of Ashes is a very prominent symbol, Fitzgerald uses to portray a very ghostly and 'grey' industrial dump in the west egg. It is the home to Myrtle Wilson who is the woman of Tom's infidelity. This solidifies the lack of morals that East eggers have which is a common trend which leads to Daisy's infidelity and the death of Myrtle. The irony is that all these sins are committed under the eyes of 'T.J. Eckleburg' who Fitzgerald used to symbolise 'God' and prove the fact that East egg has replaced morals for materialistic values, which portrays the East egg as very 'disgusting' people. This further proves as Myrtle 'ran' over 'murder' to make her 'left breast hang'. Myrtle's death represents the superiority of East egg, and the wrong doings meant that West eggers had to pay the consequence, resulting in Gatsby, Myrtle and George's death which is frustrating as later on Daisy was eating 'fried chicken'. This again conveys the horrific life of East egg as there is a lack of care of people and again proves how the higher class A.K.A East egg can get away with anything due to their high ranking in society.

However, it is vital to state that Nick who claimed to have a 'moral compass' actually allows sins to commit himself, as he went on the 'train' to see Myrtle with Tom. It proves how lack of morals is a common theme within both eggs, as Gatsby himself committed sins to achieve the 'American Dream'. This again portrays both Eggs as places lacking 'moral compass' and focus more on the materialistic, which ultimately was the revel on the Jazz era of 1920s, thus proving how both Eggs were influenced by their surroundings.

As mentioned previously the East egg is 'disgusting' as their materialistic values and the idea of getting everything have left them to lack morals. Gatsby's quest for Daisy epitomises the hard working nature of the West Egg, yet Daisy is not something he could just 'buy' which he's used to, and it further shows the West Egg's lack of power to get what they want.

In conclusion, the West and East eggs have major differences, ultimately causing the death of the main character. Yet East egg is full of greed whilst West egg is full of hard workers yet both of them show the same capitalist values.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

This answer makes some simple points, but makes only limited use of textual details, and there is little attempt to move beyond the first chapter of the novel. The question states '... settings in *The Great Gatsby*' to indicate the need to range across the text. There is some relevant comment, and there is also awareness of material that answers the question but without a firm enough grasp to incorporate it into a discussion.

AO1: The question directs the student to consider genre and place. In line with this attention is given to East Egg and West Egg, with some comment in the opening paragraph that shows simple understanding of a cultural context. A link to social class is made later. Reference is made to the American Dream with some sense of the significance of materialism. However, the discussion of both social class and the Dream is generalised and undeveloped, with ideas being indicated only. Links to the text, if they are made, are slight.

AO2: A few attempts to comment on authorial method are made. For example, there is awareness that the separation of the eggs has a function and that the green light plays a part, but clear comment is not forthcoming. The valley of ashes and the eyes of T J Eckleburg are identified as symbols but their use is not linked to the topic. Attempts are made to link the eggs to immorality but these emerge as little more than hints of understanding.

AO3: There is a simple linear structure to the discussion with some attempt to offer a debate, without being consistent. The question is not ignored, but the focus is unsteady. Errors in expression are evident and misspellings appear ('Myrtyl' is the most glaring example), but the meaning is almost always clear.

Overall, this response is consistent with the Band 2 descriptors: simple and generalised.

SECTION A

QUESTION 1

0 1

Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*

To what extent do you agree that in *Heart of Darkness* Conrad presents Africa as an entirely hostile environment?

[25 marks]

Some possible content is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but some strands listed could easily address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *Heart of Darkness* through the lens of **place**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

AO1: Demonstrate understanding of the ways in which readers find meanings in texts, showing an understanding of genre, the significance of contexts, and the ways in which different interpretations can be found.

Focus might be on:

- journey of arrival along coast – 'monotonous grimness', 'God-forsaken wilderness', shelling by French man-of-war, 'streams of death in life'
- tropical disease – 'had laid low almost every 'agent' in the [central] station'
- dangers of river journey: eg threats from land of hostile native people hidden by jungle, problems of navigation
- attack on boat, – shot at with arrows in attempt to prevent arrival at Kurtz's station and helmsman killed by spear
- Kurtz successful in exploiting environment but, inevitably perhaps, becomes its victim
- more than hostile environment – exploitation of native people and their being categorised as enemies, criminals or savages
- 'Inferno' of first company station – largely a man-made hell
- hostility of environment brings out qualities such as endeavour, courage and determination, but also aggression and violence.

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts with close attention to authorial methods.

With respect to significance of prose fiction methods:

- narrative voice – Marlow's responses to Africa and people living and working there
- foreboding generated by description of coastal journey to mouth of river
- journey inland as overarching structural device, conveying increasing hostility
- symbolism: eg river (snake-like on map), jungle, heads on posts; motif of darkness
- imagery: eg 'accursed inheritance', 'a thing monstrous and free', 'an implacable force brooding over...', mist, fog
- progression – threats intensify as journey progresses upriver towards the physical heart of darkness
- climax of 'The horror! The horror!'
- use of sound and silence to convey threat.

Given that this is an **open book** exam, references to the novel should be detailed and accurate.

A03: Express informed, personal and argued responses to literary texts, using appropriate concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate writing.

With respect to skill in writing:

- quality of relevant argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of concepts and terminology appropriate to the question
- technical accuracy.

Accept any valid interpretation and any valid discussion of contexts of production and reception which relate to the text as a whole.

STUDENT A

Joseph Conrad's presentation of a journey along the Congo river to a place that can be termed the heart of darkness suggest that Africa is an extremely hostile place. On his journey to the Inner Station Conrad's narrator, Marlow, experiences not only attacks by African people but difficulties and dangers that arise out of the environment. The river is sometimes dangerous and difficult to navigate, the climate is oppressive for Europeans and there is the constant threat of disease. However, from a post-colonial perspective we see that the land of Africa is exploited and its people are abused in terrible ways. If Africa was entirely hostile it is difficult to see how it could be so harmed by colonialism. It can also be said that the idea that Africa is entirely hostile is from a colonialist perspective.

On his voyage to the mouth of the Congo river Marlow observes a French warship, a symbol of colonial power, 'firing into a continent' and he says:

There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight.

The fact that shells are being fired at the land implies that Africa is seen as hostile and deserving of attack, but Marlow sees a situation that suggests 'insanity' and is ridiculous enough to be humorous, but also, paradoxically, sad in being mournful. So even before Marlow has begun his journey from the coast we learn of hostility towards Africa. In the same passage we learn that the men on the French ship 'were dying of fever at the rate of three a day'. This sad fact fits in with 'lugubrious' and creates irony by the aggressors being victims of an environment that is hostile to them.

When Marlow's steamer is approaching the Inner Station Africa seems like an especially hostile place. Kurtz's station is approached in 'white fog... more blinding than night' and when a loud cry is heard 'it seemed as though the mist itself had screamed'. This comparison almost personifies the mist and suggests it is an enemy. Marlow is frightened and the 'pilgrims' on his steamer arm themselves with rifles, showing a fight is expected, with the mist being an ally of the Africans who will attack the steamboat to try to keep it from landing, which, as Marlow later understands, 'was not even defensive' but 'purely protective'. The lexical choices here show how what at the time was seen as hostile by the narrator turns out to be entirely justifiable, as 'purely' shows.

The environment continues to be a serious obstacle once the fog has lifted as the river is shallow and sandbanks have to be avoided. These circumstances also aid hostilities as the steamer's crew and passengers are attacked with arrows and the helmsman is killed, but as readers have already been told that the attack is 'purely protective' we cannot agree that it is 'entirely hostile.' When we later learn that Kurtz used the Africans lack of knowledge of Europeans to make himself a pagan god in their eyes we think of them as victims, deceived into protecting their god. The sequence of the narrative which shows the reason behind 'purely protective' after the attack tells us that colonialism rather than Africa and its people lies behind the hostility and violence.

Environmental damage and what amounts to slave labour are the first things we find when Marlow arrives at the Outer Station. Conrad links the 'objectless blasting' of a cliff with the firing of the French warship to show us how this part of Africa suffers a kind of assault on the land that is completely unjustified. The chain gang of Africans that Marlow observes and pities are quite unlike the Africans he saw previously who 'were natural and true as the surf along their coast'. This contrast shows what the starving chain gang would have been like if they not been made to work for the colonisers. An environment that had been 'natural and true' for them has been made hostile by being taken over by Europeans, whose cruel exploitation is shown in the description of the Africans in the grove of death:

They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, – nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation.

The repeated negative lexis 'not... not... nothing' highlights the complete lack of hostility. By describing the shadows as black Conrad is showing that they are made victims because of their race and European hostility towards them, as shown by 'criminals'.

At the Outer Station there is 'a sick man' dying in the accountant's office and on his journey to the Central Station another colonialist falls ill with fever. Africans suffer disease because they are starved and abused, Europeans suffer disease because they are not in their own country and so may regard Africa as hostile, but they have, after all, chosen to come there and place themselves at risk. This is true of Marlow who often had 'a little fever' which he describes as 'the playful paw-strokes of the wilderness'. The image of the fever as a cat, perhaps a lion, could imply hostility, but 'playful' undermines this. However, 'playful' can also be seen as arrogance as on the return voyage 'they very nearly buried me' because of fever. Conrad's first readers may have seen willingness to face the hostile climate of Africa as heroic, but we may be less sympathetic as we know that colonisation, particularly in the Belgian Congo was a cruel business.

It is ironic that it is the African helmsman who dies when the steamer is attacked; he is a victim of hostility arising out of colonialism, the effects of which are shown by the events involving Kurtz at the Inner Station. Marlow learns from the Russian that Kurtz enlisted the men of a lake tribe in order to make raids on other tribes, which shows that European influence causes hostilities between Africans. The terrible nature of this is made clear when Marlow discovers that what looks like a fence is a row of 'heads on stakes'. The barbarity that some Victorian colonisers associated with the 'dark continent' is the result of Kurtz's leadership and because he 'lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts'. Conrad makes it that the skulls are turned to face Kurtz's hut to show that there has been human sacrifice for him. This is what many of Conrad's Victorian readers would have thought of as savage, primitive worship typical of Africans. What we see is a reversal of that assumption to show that the effect of what Kurtz has done is really hostile towards the African people as he has deceived them into thinking he is a god and so is the source of the violence they have committed against other Africans. An admirer of Kurtz tries to excuse him by saying the heads were those of rebels. If they had rebelled it was against colonial activity and so they victims of a system that it would be justified to be hostile against.

When Marlow is rescuing Kurtz he fears the hostility of his African followers he hears a cry 'that pierced the still air like an arrow'; the weapon simile obviously suggests hostility, but this is Marlow's view in the circumstances. Approaching the Inner Station he heard 'a very loud cry as of infinite desolation'. This earlier description suggests that while the Africans were threatening as Kurtz was being taken away, their cry was one of loss rather than aggression, and in fact they do not attack Marlow and his party even though their idol is being taken from them. Once Kurtz is on the steamboat the 'gorgeous apparition of a woman' stands on the shore. Conrad picks her out as an individual to make her a symbol of Africa. 'Apparition' could suggest she is unreal, but a stronger meaning is that her appearance is like nothing Marlow has seen before. His admiration for her is repeated when she is described as 'superb' and 'magnificent'. She is such a presence that Africa itself seems to 'look at her' and see 'the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul'. Personifying Africa seeing its own inner spirit is a way of making seem human and though its soul may be dark it is full of a feeling that is not essentially hostile.

As the steamboat departs all the Africans except the woman, who is again described as 'superb', flee at the sound of the boat's whistle. She is not threatening but stretches her arms 'tragically' towards the boat, because Kurtz, her lover, is being taken. It is a kind of resistance, but not hostility. She dies, shot by an 'imbecile crowd... on the deck' for 'a little fun'. This casual murder symbolises how Africa is the victim of European hostility.

Geographically the idea of a heart of darkness can be taken to imply a hostile place, the 'dark continent' as the Victorians tended to see it. But Marlow's experiences at the Inner Station show that the heart of darkness is Kurtz's heart as he created and led a regime that was brutally hostile and destructive. Darkness is a motif throughout the novel. Marlow narrates in the growing darkness over the river Thames and when he has finished the 'waterway... seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness'. The symbol of the river that flows from the centre of an empire towards darkness shows colonialism is the root cause of hostility by Europeans and in the reactions of Africans.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

This answer adopts a post-colonial critical approach and offers a sustained argument within this context. The judicious selection of material from the text exploits the opportunities offered by an open-book exam. Place as it is presented by Conrad is understood very well and used as the basis for a closely-focused argument that shows depth of thought.

AO1: A critical context is introduced in the opening paragraph and is maintained and supported throughout the argument. This is done by using examples of imperialist aggression and colonial exploitation, both of which are linked to the idea that the view given in the question is attributable to Europeans. There is persuasive and measured comment on the context of production in the comments made on Conrad's first readers and the Victorian view of the 'dark continent'. Assured linking of text, topic and context leading to perceptive interpretations is evident in a number of places; the second, fifth and seventh paragraphs are examples.

AO2: Conrad's use of Africa, particularly the river and its immediate environs, with Marlow's journey as an underlying structure, is explored perceptively. Links across the text, such as reference to the French warship firing into the jungle, demonstrate an assured grasp of narrative structure. Perceptive exploration of patterns of language, of lexical choices, of symbols and motifs can be found in many places, and the significance of these is confidently explained.

AO3: The expression is mature and sophisticated. The shaping of the closely-focused argument is impressive and draws to a close with a conclusion that introduces further points rather than offering a summary. Literary concepts are used with assurance, and add depth to the quality of debate.

This response is consistent with the Band 5 descriptors: perceptive and assured.

STUDENT B

Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* after he had been captain of a boat that sailed up the Congo river in Africa. He uses some of his experiences in his book. He uses a sailor called Marlow to tell the story of a difficult journey to rescue a man called Kurtz from the heart of darkness, the middle of Africa. 'Darkness' shows that the place is hostile.

Marlow tells his story on the deck of a boat called the *Nellie*. He wants the Director of Companies, the Lawyer and the Accountant to know how Africa is a hostile place. They are in London and don't know what Africa is like. Marlow got his job as captain because the previous captain had been killed after he was 'killed in a scuffle with the natives', which shows Africa is hostile.

After Marlow has sailed to Africa he sets out from the Outer Station and has to walk two hundred miles in the heat to the Central Station, where he finds that his steamboat has been wrecked. His difficulty is that he finds it hard to get what he needs to repair his boat, and so his mission to rescue an agent of the ivory trading company is delayed. The manager of the Central Station is jealous of Kurtz, the agent, and hopes he will die of disease before Marlow gets to him. Many Europeans, the colonisers, find the climate hostile and die of fever.

Eventually Marlow sets out to find Kurtz at the Inner Station. Sailing up the river is not easy: 'I shaved by a fluke some infernal sly old snag that would have ripped the life out of the tin-pot steamboat'. This shows, in a sailor's language, that there are obstacles in the river that could wreck the boat. It is a dangerous place and the river is surrounded by jungle. The tall trees 'made you feel very small, very lost', but Marlow says that sailing towards Kurtz was what he wanted to do, so the surroundings are not too hostile. Sometimes the river current is so strong that the steamer can only crawl along. But they keep going.

Marlow calls his passengers 'pilgrims' and when they hear a 'very loud cry' they arm themselves with rifles as they think the African people are hostile. Another problem is that thick white fog covers the river and one 'pilgrim' says 'we will be all butchered in this fog'. 'Butchered' shows he thinks they will be attacked brutally. The fog goes away and they go on up the river, but it becomes narrow and shallow in places, so it's dangerous.

Then there is serious hostility when 'little sticks were flying about'. This is strange at first until we're told they are arrows used to attack the boat. The danger has doubled. The boat has to be close to the trees to avoid a 'snag' in the river. The black helmsman is then killed by a spear after he tried shooting back. This battle shows Africa is a hostile place.

When the steamboat arrives at the Inner Station they meet a Russian who tells them that Kurtz is worshipped by the Africans, but that he is very ill. Marlow learns that the Russian is devoted to Kurtz and says 'it appeared about the most dangerous thing in every way'. We later learn why this is 'most dangerous' as Kurtz has done evil things. We can tell this because Marlow sees that what he first thought was a fence round Kurtz's hut turn out to be a row of human skulls on stakes, which show 'Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts' and so it's him and not Africa that is hostile when he does this.

Even though he has done awful things the African people who help him are not hostile towards Kurtz. In fact they worship him as a god and do what he wants and get ivory for him. Sometimes they raid other tribes to do this and so are hostile towards other Africans. When Marlow and some other go ashore to rescue Kurtz lots of people appear. They are ready to fight and look dangerous. Kurtz shouts something from his stretcher and the people go back into the forest. Kurtz himself is very ill, having suffered from the hostile fever of Africa.

When Kurtz is on the steamboat the manager talks with Marlow about how Kurtz's methods of getting ivory had been 'unsound' because they were violent, but all he's bothered about is not being able to get even more ivory. After Marlow has said he thinks Kurtz is 'remarkable' the Russian says that the manager said he ought to be hanged, showing how hostile he is.

After Kurtz leaves the steamer and tries to crawl back to his house. Marlow notices he is missing and fears 'deadly danger, the possibility of a sudden onslaught and massacre'. He seems to think that Kurtz's African followers will attack. When he finds Kurtz he is hostile and threatens to smash his head if he shouts for help.

As the steamboat is leaving the Inner Station the Africans stand on the shore and shout. There is also a woman who holds out her hands towards the boat. The pilgrims feel threatened and get ready to shoot. Marlow uses the steam whistle to frighten away all the Africans except the woman who seems to be shot dead for no other reason than she didn't want Kurtz to leave.

The journey back is downstream and so this helps the escape. Kurtz becomes more ill and dies, but not before he says 'The horror! The horror!'. This could mean lots of things, but one meaning is the horror of the Inner Station which is the heart of darkness and a place of hostile violence.

Marlow himself becomes ill because of the hostile climate and nearly dies, but lives to tell his story. At the beginning the sun is setting and as he talks it gets darker and darker. When he finishes it is completely dark. The darkness could be a symbol of a hostile world, not just Africa.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

Much of the answer is an account of Marlow's journey to the Inner Station with occasional indications of the topic. While the question is not completely ignored, the comments that do relate to it are simple and generalised. A few quotations are given but comment on them is limited. Knowledge of the text is demonstrated, but little of it is shaped to answer the question.

AO1: Simple use is made of the biographical context in the opening paragraph as it is linked to the narrator. Similar reference is made to colonialism, the effects of the African climate on Europeans, and the Congo river as a feature of the setting. Simple links to the topic are made. Understanding of the text is shown through description and paraphrase, but interpretation remains at a simple level.

AO2: An implicit grasp of the journey as a structural feature is shown, but discussion of method is largely confined to single words or brief phrases such as the comments on the arrows in the sixth paragraph, or to general comment such as 'sailors' language' in the fourth paragraph. Otherwise, quotations tend to be incorporated simply into the description of events. There is recognition of the ambiguity of 'The horror! The horror!', and a simple comment on darkness as a symbol.

AO3: The expression is clear and mostly accurate. By following the narrative as it unfolds the discussion has a shape, but there is little sense of a structured argument. Limited use is made of literary concepts.

This response is consistent with the Band 2 descriptors: simple and generalised.

SECTION A

QUESTION 6

0 6 **Andrea Levy: *Small Island***

'You'll soon get used to our language.' [Queenie]

'I can speak and understand the English language very well, thank you.' [Hortense]

In the light of this exchange of views, to what extent do you agree that the major cause of conflict in *Small Island* is presented as being misunderstanding between people from different places rather than racial prejudice?

[25 marks]

MARK SCHEME

Some possible content is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but some strands listed could easily address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *Small Island* through the lens of **place**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

AO1: Demonstrate understanding of the ways in which readers find meanings in texts, showing an understanding of genre, the significance of contexts, and the ways in which different interpretations can be found.

Focus might be on:

- Bernard's attack on Gilbert in the mistaken belief that he is the father of Queenie's child, aggravated by his racism
- Bernard 'can't understand' Gilbert's passionate exhortation for tolerance and racial equality, but Bernard's response is also racist
- despite suggestion of racism in 'our language', cultural differences rather than language cause the annoyance in the exchange between Queenie and Hortense
- Hortense's language causes difficulties, though not necessarily conflict
- overt and institutional racism in US army
- Gilbert and Hortense's experience of racism when applying for jobs and at work
- aspects of British imperialism: eg army in India
- misunderstanding and conflict between people of same race, most notably Hortense and Gilbert, Queenie and Bernard.

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts with close attention to authorial methods.

With respect to significance of prose fiction methods:

- use of different narrative voices
- variety of excuses used to refuse Gilbert accommodation
- racist diction
- narrative structure: eg developing pattern of examples of hostility and conflict
- narrative climax and significance of the birth of a mixed race child
- dialogue presents misunderstanding, but is also used to show racism
- different settings: eg Queenie's house, cinema, British Army camp in India
- pre-war, wartime and post-war Windrush settings.

Given that this is an **open book** exam, references to the novel should be detailed and accurate.

AO3: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

With respect to skill in writing:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

Accept any valid discussion of prose fiction method, any valid interpretations and any valid discussion of contexts of production and reception which relate to the whole novel.

STUDENT A

While Hortense and the other Jamaicans do 'speak and understand the English language very well', Levy does show them being misunderstood and their West Indian accent makes them different. But as Hortense and Gilbert are two of the narrators we as readers understand them well and empathise with them. On the other side of the argument, racial prejudice does play a big part in the novel and is a greater source of conflict than misunderstanding and has more serious and lasting consequences.

The American soldiers who threaten Gilbert and cause the death of Arthur Bligh are guilty of blatant racial prejudice. The conflict takes place within the context of the Second World War, but Levy uses this larger conflict as the background for hateful racial prejudice and the harm it does. She prepares for the conflict by first having Gilbert experience Jim Crow discrimination from white US soldiers who are in separate regiments from black GIs and are even billeted in separate towns in a form of institutional racism.

Gilbert meets Queenie when she's looking for her father-in-law. She says he is one of 'you lot', which could be taken as racist, but she means he's an airman. When he has tea with her in a cafe he is threatened by three GIs who 'would have no consideration for a white woman whose afternoon is spent with a nigger'. This use of racist lexis in Gilbert's narrative leaves no doubt as to the strength of the GIs' racism. The argument with the usherette in the cinema has racist lexis in the dialogue as she uses 'nigger' as well as 'coloured', thinking the latter is less offensive even though she trying to enforce racial segregation. As the tension rises the black soldiers in the audience object to 'nigger' and 'jigaboo' and Queenie is called 'nigger lover' when she rants at the white soldiers.

The verbal conflict is clearly racist as the taboo vocabulary shows and soon turns into a mass fight between white and black soldiers. Outside the cinema the fighting dies down until the American Military Police arrive and attack the black GIs. Their action is 'oxygen to a dying flame' and Gilbert is about to be attacked by an MP 'concerned only with the colour of my skin' when the shots that kill Arthur Bligh are heard at the climax of the conflict. He is described as a 'casualty of another war' but Gilbert asks 'which war?' His question raises several points. Arthur Bligh is a victim of a race war, but if there had been no world war the Americans would not have been there, so he is only partly a victim of racial conflict. He is still, ironically, an innocent victim of a race war in the context of a wider conflict. His death is placed at the end of the chapter to show it as the culmination of conflict caused by racial hatred, and so suggests that prejudice is the major reason for conflict. But it can be said that as Arthur Bligh's death was not intended it was the result of misunderstanding.

Hortense's colour snobbery, her belief that her light skin colour is superior, can be understood as an effect of the racism that supported colonialism. When Celia says that Hitler would bring back slavery Hortense believes that as her skin is 'the colour of warm honey' she would not be enslaved. This is largely due to her lack of understanding before she has experienced racism in England. However, it is also placed within the context of Nazi racism and the approaching war.

Michael Roberts may seem like a minor character, mostly in the background, but he has a key function. The argument between him and his father arises out of differences of understanding. Mr Philip believes in the Bible and its version of the Creation. Michael challenges this with 'the notion that men are descended from monkeys'. These differences split the family and after his affair with Mrs Ryder is discovered he goes to England and so begins a series of emigrations. His child, named after him, is source of racial conflict but also a symbol of hope, of the potential for racial harmony.

The conflict between Gilbert and Bernard over Queenie's baby involves both racism and misunderstanding. Levy prepares us for the climatic argument by having Gilbert recognise that 'with this beleaguered man's return the days of living quiet in this house had come to an end'. The key word in this observation is 'beleaguered' as Gilbert, as a fellow soldier understands how Bernard has returned to a very changed world and knows he is 'a bewildered soul'. The combination of 'man' and 'soul' show a depth of understanding by Gilbert. But this does not mean there will be no conflict. In a section narrated by Bernard, which presents a racist perspective and uses lexis such as 'darkie woman' for Hortense, and both her and Gilbert as 'wogs'. By this stage in the novel we have grown close to both characters, particularly as their individual narratives have given us detailed insights into their characters. This makes Bernard's language, as he is trying to throw them out of the house, particularly offensive. Near the end of his section of narrative Bernard misunderstands Gilbert's concern to help Queenie as 'lust in his eye'. This shows a conventional racist view of black men.

The narrative then switches to Hortense. Presenting the birth from her perspective anticipates her becoming the baby's mother. Queenie gives birth to her 'perfect boy', which shows she's not troubled by his colour. This is supported by her not responding when Hortense asks her if she realises the baby is black. Gilbert is then used to narrate the next chapter so we see Bernard's attack on him directly. Bernard's obvious mistake is to take the baby's colour as a sign that Gilbert is the father. In this way misunderstanding and racism are combined, but Gilbert's reference to Bernard's 'cuckold's horn' gives priority to his mistake as the cause of his aggression. When Gilbert says he is not the father Bernard says 'it's everything to do with you... and your kind', showing that racism is still a large part of his anger.

Hortense shares Bernard's mistake by jumping to the conclusion that Gilbert has been unfaithful, but this conflict doesn't last long as he rescues her from being mistaken for a prostitute. A mistake that helps to end conflict.

Bernard changes and thinks of the baby as 'a dear little thing' and argues with Queenie over giving baby Michael to Hortense and Gilbert. Despite his prejudice it takes Queenie to make him understand that they cannot bring the baby up in a racist society as there would be conflict with neighbours and there would be family conflict as it is inevitable that at some time he would think of Michael as a 'little black bastard'. Racism is shown as an irresistible cause of conflict in the society of the time.

The narrative continues unbroken but Hortense becomes the narrator for the part when there is conflict because Gilbert touches Queenie as he tries to comfort her and Bernard calls him a 'savage', which shows his colonialist attitude. Gilbert responds with a noble speech in which he explains clearly that they are equals, the only difference being their colour. He says Bernard should 'stop this now', 'this' being his belief in white superiority. Levy presents Bernard's reply through Hortense as beginning 'I'm sorry' and then delays the rest to give us the brief hope that he can overcome his prejudice and end the conflict. But he continues with 'I just can't understand a single word that you're saying'. This is ambiguous as 'can't understand' could mean he could not follow because of Gilbert's accent, or it could mean that he refuses to accept a black person can be his equal. The latter is the stronger interpretation as he has understood Gilbert before and earlier, as narrator Bernard tells us he 'couldn't understand a word' when listening to Hortense but this must be an exaggeration as he says he 'caught something about making the room nice'. It seems he does have some difficulty understanding a Jamaican accent, but his exaggeration suggests he's doesn't want to understand.

The quotation given in the question is part of the conversation when Queenie and Hortense first meet and Queenie is trying to explain figures of speech. It's not so much that she doesn't understand Hortense but that some cultural differences are misunderstood. When Queenie takes Hortense shopping there is humorous conflict when Hortense's accent prevent her from being understood and there is inner conflict as she thinks because 'at college my diction was admired by all' her speech must be clear to all. Levy increases the comedy by having Queenie explain obvious things such as which shop is the grocery.

In both marriages there is conflict. Bernard cannot understand Queenie's lack of racial prejudice. Between Hortense and Gilbert there is misunderstanding of the basis of their marriage. Hortense suggests their marriage as it is essential if she is to follow him to England. There is the opposite of what is normal as she comes up with the idea and he then decides to propose after two hours: 'he shook my hand when I said yes, like a business deal'. The hand shake shows the lack of romance and is the formality of 'a business deal'. This rather comic situation anticipates the hilarious wedding night when Gilbert expects sexual intercourse, but Hortense does not properly understand his physical excitement, which she describes as 'this hideous predicament between his legs'. Presented from her innocent perspective, the conflict is very funny, particularly as Gilbert accepts rejection and the detailed description of the changes to his genitals makes his disappointment laughable.

In most cases the conflict is serious. Racism and misunderstanding feature regularly and sometimes are interwoven. In some key passages they are inseparable, but racism is usually the dominant factor.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

The sustained argument incorporates discussion of significance and method within the contexts of cultural differences and racism. A sharp focus is maintained and the apt selection of details for comment demonstrates clear understanding of the opportunities offered by an open-book exam, when this is combined with a thorough knowledge of the whole text.

AO1: The question invites debate involving racial prejudice and this answer adopts a clear line of argument within this cultural context by maintaining the view given at the end of the opening paragraph. The historical context of war is also linked to the text and the topic with firm grasp of irony. Family relationships are also carefully considered. Sources of conflict are variously and perceptively interpreted with assured contextual links, and there is insight into the complexity of human relationships, particularly across different cultures.

AO2: The use of different narrators offering different perspectives is introduced in the first paragraph and receives comment in the course of the answer, especially between the seventh and eleventh paragraphs. Assurance can be seen in the ways in which the changes of perspective are incorporated into the argument. Racist language is dealt with sensitively with clear understanding of Levy's method. There are perceptive comments on a number of features of language – in the seventh paragraph for example. The combination of structural and linguistic comment in the eleventh paragraph shows mature insight.

AO3: The argument ranges across the text in its discussion of particular passages and details, and is focused and shaped to present a convincing argument. The final paragraph is a brief conclusion but this does not detract from the overall quality of the debate. The conclusion does add a further observation and in this way receives a little more credit than if a summary of points already made were offered. The expression is mature and impressive.

This response is consistent with the Band 5 descriptors: perceptive and assured.

STUDENT B

Andrea Levy's father came to England from Jamaica in 1948 and her mother came soon after him. So *Small Island* could be based on their experiences. She uses four people to tell the story. Hortense and Gilbert are black and could be like Andrea Levy's mother and father. They have different views and so do Queenie and Bernard the white people who tell their side of the story.

Even in Jamaica Hortense and Gilbert think of England as the mother country which is part of the reason they move to London. Gilbert was in the RAF in the war and so had some idea what England was like. He had some problems because he was black. One example is that he was attacked by American soldiers. Even so he wanted to come to England. So did Hortense. She lent him money and married him so she could follow him to England in 1948. She found London very strange and did not like the room in Queenie's house and argued with Gilbert about the way they had to live. She is disappointed as the mother country is not what she expected and this is shown as she repeats 'is this the way the English live?' She also suspects Gilbert because he knew Queenie when he was in the RAF.

Mr Todd is Queenie's neighbour and he doesn't like her having 'darkies' having rooms in her house saying the street was 'respectable' before foreigners came and the English people should be 'sticking together'. There are many examples of racism in the book. Gilbert says that England is not like a mother but a 'cantankerous hag'. Even in Jamaica he's told he can't study law but must be a baker instead. His friend Elwood says they should fight for Jamaica to be independent, but Gilbert goes to England because he thinks there are more opportunities. He gets a job as a postman, but some of the men will not work with him because he is black. The foreman calls him 'coon'. At a railway station he is insulted and threatened but can't fight back because he would lose his job. He is so upset that he is angry with Hortense for kneeling down to clean the floor and she argues with him because he is in the way while she tries to cook.

Gilbert's friends suffer because of racism. One is told not to go to his local church anymore because his skin is too dark. But not everyone is racist. A woman is kind to Gilbert. She tells him he has dropped a glove and gives him a sweet to help him feel warm. This is so unusual that he has a tear on his face.

Queenie tries to help Hortense by taking her shopping but not everyone can understand her strange accent, and Queenie does not realise that Hortense already knows what some of the shops are. In the street she is called 'golliwog' and 'sambo' by people who don't know this is wrong. Queenie looks after her and tells her to keep walking so there isn't any more trouble. Soon after they meet Bernard, Queenie's husband, who has been slow coming home from the war.

Bernard is a racist. He was in the RAF in India. He is attacked in an air raid almost as soon as he arrives. He sees a Japanese prisoner who will be shot and begins to see how vicious war is. He's afraid when he has to go out into the jungle but shows some bravery. In Calcutta he sees the effects of the fighting between Hindus and Moslems, but is not very concerned and in his story he says that even after two years in India 'they still looked all the same to me' showing he is racist as he doesn't see any differences between different people. So even though his character develops he is still a racist.

When Bernard returns home in 1948 there is conflict because he wants the black lodgers in his house to leave. Gilbert argues with him. Queenie is on Gilbert's side, but she goes into labour and gives birth to the baby whose father is Michael Roberts. When Bernard sees the black baby he makes the mistake of thinking Gilbert is the father and fights him.

After Queenie tells him the truth Bernard begins to care for the baby, but she says they must give him to Hortense and Gilbert because white people in England are so racist. Queenie begs Hortense and Gilbert to take the baby called Michael Roberts when they move out to their own house. They do so there will be less conflict for the baby as it grows up, but they know there will still be racism. For example, even though Gilbert and Bernard fought on the same side for the mother country Bernard still has racial prejudice.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

Some of the references to 'the mother country' suggest that the question that appeared on the June 2017 paper had been kept in mind while an account of events was being given. The topic is not entirely ignored, but much of the comment remains descriptive in nature. Limited use is made of quotation, and comment on authorial method is very thin.

AO1: The attempt at the beginning to show some biographical context is unhelpful. Some grasp of racism is shown, but misunderstanding resulting from cultural differences is largely absent from the discussion. There is awareness of place as a cultural genre and simple connections are made to race as a context. Interpretations that arise out of these links are simple or generalised.

AO2: The use of different narrators is noted and examples of language use are given, but comments are generally brief and scattered thinly. The example of repetition given in the second paragraph illustrates the level of comment. Some implicit understanding of the narrative structure is shown in the way the discussion is sequenced; similarly, there is some implicit awareness of irony shown in the concluding paragraph.

AO3: The description of content is orderly, but there is quite little in the way of argument. Not all the discussion relates to the task, but there is some relevance in the observations of action and character. The expression is clear and largely accurate.

This response is consistent with the Band 2 descriptors: simple and generalised.

SECTION B

QUESTION 8

Section B: Poetry

Answer **one** question from this section.

0 8

William Wordsworth poetry selection

'Wordsworth's first impressions of places have more significance than his later memories of them.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? You should make detailed reference to 'Tintern Abbey' and at least one other poem.

[25 marks]

Some possible content is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but as 'significance' relates to contextual, structural, linguistic and interpretative issues some strands listed could easily address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied Wordsworth's poetry selection through the lens of **place**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

AO1: Demonstrate understanding of the ways in which readers find meanings in texts, showing an understanding of genre, the significance of contexts, and the ways in which different interpretations can be found.

Focus might be on:

- immediacy and influence of first impressions: eg 'Tintern Abbey', 'Nutting', 'Daffodils'
- dynamic relationship between first impressions and memories, evident in: eg 'Tintern Abbey'
- how place immediately impresses itself on the observer: eg 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge'
- first response in 'Nutting' followed by reaction to despoliation
- reader led to first impression of 'heap of unstrewn stones' as pretext for narrative in 'Michael'
- irrevocable change to first sight of Peele Castle occasioned by 'deep distress'
- memory re-lived as if immediate: eg 'Daffodils'
- need for retention of first impressions as in 'Yarrow Unvisited'.

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts with close attention to authorial methods.

With respect to significance of poetic method:

- evocation of impressions of place through metaphor, symbol and diction
- focus on response to particular details: eg in opening stanza of 'Tintern Abbey', hazel grove in 'Nutting', daffodils and water in 'Daffodils'
- structure and development of interaction between impressions, thoughts and feelings
- address to unspeaking listener: eg 'Tintern Abbey', 'Yarrow Unvisited'
- use of first person to present direct experience
- perspective, tone, reverential attitude
- reflection, introspection
- verse forms.

Given that this is an **open book** exam, references to the poems should be detailed and accurate.

AO3: Express informed, personal and argued responses to literary texts, using appropriate concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate writing.

With respect to skill in writing:

- quality of relevant argument, here related to the poetic presentation of place
- organisation of ideas
- use of concepts and terminology appropriate to the question
- technical accuracy.

Accept any valid interpretation and any valid discussion of contexts of production and reception which are grounded in the poems. In all cases references to language and structure should be used to demonstrate how the ideas are expressed.

STUDENT A

It is to be expected that a close relationship between first impressions and later memories will be found in Wordsworth's poetry. However, while first impressions are essential for this relationship to exist at all it is in enduring memories that greater meanings are to be found. 'Tintern Abbey' shows complex interactions between what is seen and heard in the landscape and how, when they are remembered, these prompt deep thoughts and feelings. 'Nutting' is a memory of a boy's expedition in which his first responses of excitement in gathering hazel nuts change when he sees the destruction involved, so that the memory of what was done becomes a lesson in respect for nature.

'Tintern Abbey' begins with a memory of a previous visit five years earlier with an emphasis that the immediate experience is being repeated: 'again I hear/These waters... Once again/Do I behold... Once again I see'. But even in the opening section the sights and sounds 'impress/Thoughts of more deep seclusion' which are not first impressions so that the scene expands to include 'the quiet of the sky' which implies not just greater space but growing thought. At the beginning of the second section we are shown how the speaker was supported when he remembered the impressions of his first visit as the 'beauteous forms' were:

felt along the heart:
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration.

The memories first create a physical sensation but then pass into the mind to become a memory that renews the spirit.

The closing section of the poem is addressed to 'my dearest Friend', 'my dear, dear Sister' whose first impressions of the scene 'a few miles above Tintern Abbey remind the poet of what he 'was once' when 'like a roe' he 'bounded o'er the mountains'. This simile with its comparison to an animal shows how when younger he responded unthinkingly to his first impressions of the landscape. Similar to this are his sister's 'wild ecstasies', where 'wild' can be read as suggesting the same simple response of 'like a roe'. However, he confidently assures her that she too will find her:

mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling place
For all sweet sounds.

Once again there is an image of the 'mind' containing and holding what is seen and heard in the form of memories that will enable 'healing thoughts/Of tender joy'. This is very like the 'tranquil restoration' the poet felt when he remembered his first visit to Tintern Abbey. By looking at both these passages together it becomes clear that the memories that come out of first impressions have lasting significance in that they are able to counteract 'solitude, or fear, or pain or grief'. This list of various troubles show that memories of first impressions have a lasting power to console and restore the spirit.

Having seen how Wordsworth begins and ends his poem by showing how first impressions, though strong in themselves, become even more meaningful as memories that remain and can be recalled, there is a further effect of 'beauteous forms' on the mind. While 'feelings.../Of unremembered pleasure' are not really memories they are kept in the mind and have 'influence' in 'little, nameless, unremembered, acts/Of kindness and of love'. The repetition of 'unremembered' shows how the effect is not through conscious thought but is an organic influence of nature – not exactly memory but a continuing emotional effect of past impressions. At the end of the second section of 'Tintern Abbey' Wordsworth goes so far as to say that these 'feelings.../Of unremembered pleasure' enable us to 'see into the life of things', to find a spirit in the natural world that connects with the human spirit.

In the third section of the poem the poet first remembers how in his 'boyish days' what he saw and the joy he felt 'had no need of a remoter charm,/Unborrowed from the eye'. These first impressions were intense immediate feelings, summed up as 'dizzy raptures', which tells us they were not thought about or reflected on. They were significant as strong emotions, and now they are no longer felt without thought they are a 'loss'. The poet's memories of his 'appetite' for the 'colours' and 'forms' of nature, where each of these words implies first impressions, lead him to an expression of spirituality:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused.

'Felt' shows this is a memory of an experience that is an expression of faith in a god-like 'presence' to be found in nature and in human thought. It connects the poet to nature through a sense that is an interaction between him and what he sees and hears. Sense impressions are essential, but it is through thinking about them that the fullest meaning is understood. The 'mighty world of eye and ear' 'half create' and 'perceive'. The senses of sight and hearing do so much more than gather impressions as they work with the mind and the objects of nature to bring understanding of Nature as a spirit that pervades natural objects and the poet's mind. Wordsworth begins the fourth and final section of 'Tintern Abbey' stating he has been 'thus taught' and this implies that what he has learned is retained in his memory. He is then ready to pass on what he has learned to his sister, as he has also done for us.

'Nutting' ends with a lesson learned and remembered: 'there is a spirit in the woods' and the structure of the poem is an account of a solitary boy's day of gathering hazel nuts followed by his adult self reflecting on how he responded as a boy to the destruction he caused, and so the memory of his actions has change his life. Much of the poem can be seen as a record of first impressions, immediate responses to the natural environment, but memory is emphasised in just the third line as it is on 'one of those heavenly days that cannot die', which uses an exaggeration to make the point. Looking back, the adult voice of the poem shows an amused attitude towards the boy he was, particularly at how he was dressed 'more ragged than need was' for gathering nuts, but when the boy approaches the hazels with their 'tempting clusters' the place is a 'virgin scene', so when this is followed soon by 'voluptuous' a sexual connotation is introduced that implies that a kind of rape will take place. So the poet is showing how the boy's first impressions were unthinking in terms of the consequences of what he would do.

Before the boy gathers the nuts and damages the trees the poet describes a beautiful, unspoilt scene where 'unseen' violets grow, and the boy lying down listening to the sound of a stream. He is then described in this way:

The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air.

There is indulgence in 'luxuriates' and this is with objects that are indifferent. This is so unlike the 'presence' that 'rolls through all things' in 'Tintern Abbey' that it stands out by being so different. Wordsworth is preparing for the 'merciless ravage' of the damage that is done and is showing that the impression that the 'things' of nature are without a feeling spirit is wrong, that 'kindliness' needs to be shown. This is something that the boy realises when he feels 'a sense of pain' which is his feeling but is also his sense that the trees feel the harm he has done. Near the end of the poem the sky is no longer 'vacant' but 'intruding' as it tells him he has done wrong. The closing lines are again addressed to Wordsworth's sister who is told to move 'in gentleness of heart', rather than luxuriating. She is told not to be like the boy Wordsworth but to touch 'with gentle hand'. The memory of his 'merciless ravage' has taught him that things are not 'indifferent' but have a spirit. Like 'Tintern Abbey' 'Nutting' is in blank verse, which is not typical of many of the 'Lyrical Ballads poems' they were published with. The lack of rhyme allows for a more conversational feel that fits with the idea that Dorothy Wordsworth is addressed.

Both 'Nutting' and 'Tintern Abbey' show that while first impressions are obviously essential it is memory that allows for them to be reflected upon and thought about. In the relationship between Wordsworth and his sister as it appears in the poem is the message that while simple enjoyment of what is experienced in nature is a good thing, deep understanding comes through remembering experiences of contact with nature.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

This answer engages with the question from its opening sentences and presents a sophisticated argument in response to the topic. AO1 and AO2 are often integrated as significance is explored. There is also ample evidence of a student who is able to think through ideas and show depth of understanding.

AO1: The cultural genre of place is explored with regard to possible responses to the natural world as a context. The context of production is implicit in the response to the question and made explicit in comments on the addressee in the discussion of both poems. The significance of both first impressions and memories is explored and closely connected to these contexts, resulting in perceptive interpretations. In addition, there is particularly good work on the relationship between impressions and memories for both 'Tintern Abbey' and 'Nutting'. There is depth in the exploration of different meanings.

AO2: Perceptive understanding of the structures of both 'Tintern Abbey' and 'Nutting' is shown through close analysis of how first impressions and memories lead to the development of thoughts and feelings. An example of this appears in the second paragraph, where impressions, memories and the thoughts that arise from them are linked to the setting. There is assured engagement with voice and perspective and the part they play in shaping meaning. One example of this is in the comments on the adult voice as it reflects on the boy in 'Nutting' and which are combined with insight into lexical choices. It is evident in the exploration of both poems that the student reads up and down as well as across the lines in order to make links and trace developments.

AO3: A close focus is maintained throughout a clear, logical and well-structured discussion. The argument is assured, engaging and persuasive in a mature expression of personal interpretations. Precise and perceptive thinking is displayed in this sophisticated response.

This response is consistent with the Band 5 descriptors: perceptive and assured.

STUDENT B

First impressions and memories appear in Tintern Abbey and Wordsworth's most famous poem Daffodils. In Tintern Abbey he describes what he sees in the scene and what it makes him think and feel. In Daffodils he's just looking at the flowers and saying what they look like.

Above Tintern Abbey he sees things like trees, cliffs, cottages and farms. Because he's been to this place before he remembers what he's seen and says that the 'beauteous forms' have been remembered and helped him when he felt bad, and so his memory may be more significant. The poem tells us his impressions of things like cliffs, cottages and woods that are part of the 'secluded scene' which he finds so beautiful that he believes in them and can remember, for example, 'how oft in spirit, have I turned to thee, O sylvan Wye!'. Another point to emphasise this is he repeats, 'How often has my spirit turned to thee!'

Tintern Abbey tells us a lot about Wordsworth's beliefs which are about God being in nature. When he was a boy he ran over the mountains 'like a roe' and all his feelings were excited and were 'aching joys'. But he had to leave that part of his life behind him when he started thinking about nature and became able to 'see into the life of things', where 'see' means more than just looking at the outside but seeing how he is part of what he sees. Also, even though he doesn't have the 'joy' he had once he still has love of nature and has the 'joy' of thinking about nature and how it helps him, 'heart and soul'.

His sister is his 'dearest friend' and is with him and she makes him remember because she is like how he was before, because she has 'wild eyes'. The poem has a prayer that Nature will be 'full of blessings' and help her when she is 'dreary'. He says the nature has the power to feed her with thoughts that can be 'healing'. He wants her to be able to remember natural things and to remember him if he shouldn't be around.

There's more religious language when he says he is a 'worshipper of nature' and feels 'holier love' for it now. He hopes that his sister will remember they were together by the woods and cliffs and that she will remember what they meant.

Daffodils begins with the sight of the flowers:

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils.

By saying 'crowd' Wordsworth is showing that there are a lot of daffodils all close together. This is his first impression. There is a rhyme in this poem of abab for the first four lines of each stanza, which makes it more like a normal poem than Tintern Abbey. Further on he says that there as many as stars in the Milky Way and even that they are a 'never-ending' line before he says he saw ten thousand. His impression of them is changing as he sees different numbers of daffodils. After being compared to stars they are compared to dancers.

Though the flowers are beside a lake they 'out did the sparkling waves in glee', so they seem happier and they make the poet happy because he's in 'company' and not 'lonely' anymore, and he can't do anything but look at the golden daffodils. At the ends he says that he does remember them as he sees them with an 'inward eye' and he is happy again when he does this.

The title Composed Upon Westminster Bridge gives us the understanding that the impressions were written down right away and so it's not a memory. It is a sonnet, so it has 14 lines and two parts, the first eight lines and then the last six. The poet's first impression is that 'Earth has not anything to show more fair', so there's nowhere more beautiful than the City seen from the bridge. There's a list of things that can be seen, 'ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples' but they are open to the fields, so it's not like a modern city.

In the second part of the poem we understand that the poet has never seen a natural place that is more beautiful than the city because it is so quiet and calm. It's so quiet that the 'houses seem asleep' and the place seems dead because its heart is 'still'.

All three poems show the experience of first impressions, mostly of nature, but not always. There are memories. But these are not as strong as first sights.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

Though there is reference to the topic of the question the approach is descriptive from the start. There is some simple understanding of biographical elements in 'Tintern Abbey'. A little grasp of method is shown, but for both poems this is largely confined to word-level comment. Quotations are given, but overall the understanding shown is generalised in a response that is a commentary rather than a debate of the topic.

AO1: There is awareness of the particular settings in both poems and a sense of relevant biographical details, but these are described rather than made part of a consideration of the topic of the question. Similarly, there is simple understanding of the content of the poem, but this is largely paraphrase and there is little in the way of interpretation that addresses the question directly.

AO2: There is a little comment on language such as the identification of 'religious language', the implication of a 'crowd' of daffodils and the noting of the use of a list in the 'Westminster Bridge' sonnet. The comment on the title of this same sonnet is an example of a helpful observation that could have been considered further. The identification of the rhyme scheme of 'Daffodils' and the recognition of sonnet form do not show how meaning is shaped.

AO3: The ordering of comments usually follows the poems line by line with little sense of an overview. This simple structure is suitably paragraphed and there is a summative comment linked to the topic and offered as a conclusion. The expression is clear and largely accurate.

This response is consistent with the Band 2 descriptors of simple and generalised.

SECTION B

QUESTION 9

0 9

Robert Frost poetry selection

'Frost's use of place shows that the experience of isolation has more significance than contact with other people.'

To what extent do you agree with this interpretation? You should make detailed reference to at least two poems.

[25 marks]

Some possible content is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but as 'significance' relates to contextual, structural, linguistic and interpretative issues some strands listed could easily address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied Frost's poetry selection through the lens of **place**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

AO1: Demonstrate understanding of the ways in which readers find meanings in texts, showing an understanding of genre, the significance of contexts, and the ways in which different interpretations can be found.

Focus might be on:

- desire of isolated individual to communicate experience: eg 'An Unstamped Letter...'
- reflection on self in 'Birches'
- emphasis on shared experience in 'On Looking Up...'
- co-operation with another in 'Mending Wall' where neighbour wants separation if not isolation
- place in 'Black Cottage' gives rise to preacher's story of woman isolated by loss of husband
- individual decision leading to reflection on choices and regret: eg 'The Road Not Taken'
- isolation by work and fatigue in 'After Apple Picking'
- solitary encounter in 'The Wood Pile' leads to contemplation of another person's life.

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts with close attention to authorial methods.

With respect to significance of poetic method:

- perspective of individual first-person voice: eg 'The Wood Pile', 'Stopping By Woods...', 'The Road Not Taken'
- structure: eg dialogue in 'Mending Wall', first seventeen lines of 'The Wood Pile' a prelude to reflection and thoughts of another
- verse forms – structural use of single stanza, as well as four-line and five-line stanzas
- depiction of features of natural environment through figurative language, precise diction
- use of direct speech as well as speech rhythms
- structural use of rhyme
- use of repetition
- use of rhetorical questions.

Given that this is an **open book** exam, references to poems should be specific and accurate.

AO3: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

With respect to skill in writing:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

Accept any valid discussion of poetic method, any valid interpretations and any valid discussion of contexts of production and reception which are grounded in the question and which relate to the whole collection.

STUDENT A

Robert Frost uses the sense of place in many of his poems. Many of his poems focus on the isolation which can be experienced in rural places. Frost knew rural New England well, as he was surrounded by woods, lakes and land inhabited by few people. The personas in his poems often contemplate these places and develop deep and sometimes philosophical thoughts, and so it can be said that the experience of isolation has more significance than contact with other people. The speakers in Frost's poems are often alone in a rural place and find themselves engulfed in complete isolation, which they seem to prefer to human contact.

In 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' Frost highlights complete isolation by having his first person persona surrounded by trees with only his 'little horse' with him. The poem begins by showing the nearest person, the owner of the woods, is away in the village. By making a contrast between knowing the owner and him being at a distance so that 'he will not see me' there is a sense that the speaker is happier being alone. Frost has the speaker riding through the woods on the twenty-first of December, which was the 'darkest evening of the year' in 1922. By setting the poem in the woods on the darkest and longest night of the year Frost introduces the temptation and attraction of death that is resisted at the end of the poem. The repetition of 'And miles to go before I sleep' as the conclusion shows that 'miles to go' means that he must carry on living before he can 'sleep' or die, where 'sleep' shows that death is attractive as we all enjoy sleeping. The four lines of the last stanza all rhyme. Linking 'deep' and 'sleep' links the darkness of the woods, which suggests death, with sleep which is a euphemism for death. The idea of wanting to die is an individual thing and so the isolation in the poem is more significant.

Another poem which expresses how isolation is more significant than human contact is 'Desert Places'. The title of this poem is a complete metaphor for the mind of the speaker within the natural place as he is seen to convey his own thoughts and feelings. He is seen to be more scared of his feeling that the natural environment he is in: 'I have it in me so much nearer home/To scare myself with my own desert places'. If 'in me' and 'my own' are put together it shows what he finds in his mind is more scary. Perhaps his 'desert places' are depressed feelings that make him want to die. In any case, it is being isolated in a lonely place that makes him think deeply.

In 'Stopping by Woods' Frost has the speaker not how he came 'to stop without a farmhouse near' to highlight his total isolation after showing the owner of the wood 'is in the village'. In contrast the speaker is 'between the woods and frozen lake'. 'Village' and 'farmhouse' connote contact with people and by being far away it is the isolation that is more significant as it suits the speaker's mood and personal thinking. Isolation allows him to ride through the woods and find comfort in dark woods that are not scary but 'lovely'.

Frost's use of first person narration throughout the poem may mean he is portraying his own thoughts and feelings, which allows the reader to understand Frost's depiction of his own isolation from any human contact when he suffered from depression. The use of four quatrains gives the poem a symmetrical structure to show the ideas are carefully thought out. Iambic tetrameter is used to convey the regular structure and form of the poem. The setting is an isolated, wild place but the thoughts that come out of it are in a clear process. The aaba rhyme scheme for the first three quatrains allows the poem to have a lyrical almost hypnotic flow that suggests how the sleep of death is tempting as well as showing Frost's appreciation of the beauty of isolation. The change to four lines of rhyme in the last quatrain shows how the hypnotic flow and temptation of death are broken.

Frost describes how the woods are 'lovely, dark and deep' as the speaker rides into them to highlight isolation as 'dark' shows he is hidden and 'deep' being the last in the line adds to how isolated he is. The use of a list of three when the woods are described helps to convey Frost's hypnotic tone. 'Dark' and 'deep' would usually suggest danger but have 'lovely' first in the list of three shows the isolated place as tempting. The speaker is lured into the temptation of death. The connotations of the two descriptive adjectives 'dark' and 'deep' connote feelings of temptation towards death and almost of finding comfort in the thought of the dark woods. This is due to the hypnotic atmosphere of place that is so isolated that it is very quiet as the only sound as well as the horse's bells is 'easy wind and downy flake'. The snow is gentle as the image shows that it is 'easy' and 'downy' like falling asleep, especially as the 'sweep' of the wind rhymes with 'sleep' and gets us ready for the idea of death. Frost's appreciation of isolation changes from a positive one to a negative one in the last quatrain as the temptation must be resisted because of 'promises to keep'. 'Promises' means relationships with other people, not isolation and so at the end there are 'miles to go'. The woods of death must be left behind as the 'miles' show he must live a lot longer.

Another poem by Frost which explores isolation experiences as being more significant than human contact is 'Desert Places'. The title of the poem is a metaphor to represent the speaker's thoughts and feelings, even though he feels his mind is like a 'desert'. The use of the metaphor in the title expresses how feelings of isolation in a natural place has in the end more of a negative effect on him rather than a positive effect. This is because he is more scared of what is going on in his head than a natural situation which 'snow falling and night falling fast' put in the first line show there is the danger of being trapped.

I agree with the view that 'the experience of isolation has more significance than contact with other people' because Frost allows the speaker to be engulfed in complete isolation in a lonely place. This allows for a deeper exploration of thoughts and feelings. Frost shows the negative toll of isolation on humans as he notes the persona is 'too absent spirited to count'. This is said after the woods are shown to be in control and the 'animals are smothered in their lairs' to protect themselves. The contrast shows that the speaker is isolated and made to feel 'absent spirited'. He feels something is missing.

However, the speaker says 'the loneliness included me unawares'. He is part of the lonely feeling of the place but the place, even though it is personified, is unaware of him making him more lonely so 'included' is ironic. But 'unawares' is also ambiguous in that it could be the speaker who is unaware and so he cannot know he is included. Being included but not included is paradoxical and highlight the negative isolation. This makes me agree with the interpretation that isolation is more significant than encounters with people. Though we visualise how isolated the speaker is there is a somewhat tone of comfort in the idea that though he is so isolated from his surrounding his feelings of loneliness about the place try to comfort him and bring him companionship as he knows the place is 'unawares' but he still feels 'included'. Frost then has his speaker note how he has come to 'scare myself with my own desert places' as it symbolises his feelings towards being alone in the woods without any human contact. Having the last line end with 'to scare myself with my own desert places' makes a connection with the title of the poem and highlights the meaning that has been developing in the second half of the poem with the growing loneliness of the place leading to the conclusion that 'near home' are 'my own desert places' that are more scary than the experience of isolation in the rural place. 'Home' usually makes us think of comfort and companionship but here is it ironic as it means within the lonely speaker.

I fully agree with the interpretation that 'Frost's use of place shows that the experience of isolation has more significance than contact with other people' because Frost has voiced his own opinions about the effects of complete isolation as he experienced it in the rural environment of New England. Frost shows that for him the only way in which he can portray his feelings and thoughts is without human contact as there are no distractions directing him away from his thinking.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

The argument offered agrees with the view given in the question and offers ample comment and evidence in support. Whilst the alternative is not given much attention, it is not ignored and, crucially, the discussion is always focused. Place as a cultural genre is explored in detail while features of the poems chosen for discussion are subject to careful analysis.

AO1: Some general biographical information appears in the opening paragraph, but isolation in relation to place is soon introduced and remains the focus of the discussion for the rest of the answer. An assumption that the voice in the poems is only that of Frost is avoided and, therefore, helpfully separates the poet and his work. Assured connections are made between places and feelings of isolation the speakers' responses being developed into persuasive interpretations. The second paragraph makes a link between the winter solstice as a context and 'the temptation and attraction of death' before going on to develop a close, perceptive analysis of the succeeding lines.

AO2: There is sustained exploration of poetic methods in terms of structure, form and language and there are examples of perceptive understanding of how these features work together to shape meanings. For example, having hit upon the idea of 'hypnotic flow' in the rhyme scheme after commenting on structure at the beginning of the fifth paragraph, the analysis continues into discussion of language in the sixth paragraph before returning to form. Significance is perceptively explained throughout this analysis. The readiness to engage with ambiguity and paradox in the tenth paragraph is commendable and clear evidence of an assured approach.

AO3: The argument is well shaped despite the somewhat intrusive third paragraph on 'Desert Places'. To move from one poem to another and back is an appropriate technique and this example is not out of place, though it does seem like an awkward change of direction when the discussion returns to 'Stopping by Woods'. This said, the argument is persuasive in its overall structure as well as its attention to the text. The discussion in the tenth paragraph may not be entirely clear, but, as noted above, a readiness to engage with complexities in such a way deserves to be rewarded.

This response is consistent with the Band 5 descriptors: perceptive and assured.

STUDENT B

Isolation is a very prominent theme in frost poetry which is underlying and recurring especially in the poems 'Birches' and 'Desert places'. In 'Birches' the person is 'pathless' and isolated from reality, which no goal in life. Whilst 'Desert places' involves being in an 'empty' space, isolated from the world. Out, out will also be discussed due to the contact with other people.

Frost portrays the persona as 'pathless' with no aspirations. Through the form of this poem. The blank verse with no rhyme, portrays this idea of the persons isolation leaving him restricted and unable to change. Which is symbolic to the 'snow crust' on the birches, as both the persona's isolation has left him stiff and unable to adapt and move forward in life, whilst the 'snow leaves' the 'birches' defenceless. Ultimately, the persona has surrounded himself with the isolation rather than people which is whats 'kicking' him and turning Frost 'weary' of life.

Frost use of 'Birches' to symbolises poverty, as both are full of 'crack' and unstable, and gets surpressed by whats above them, which is the upper class and 'snow'. Frost conveys the persona's isolation from reality as he misunderstands the 'darker' capitalist society. The persona's misconception of being 'loaded' has done nothing but cause 'cracks' to his fragile 'glass' like life, which eventually shattering him and leaving him unable to 'climb' higher in the capitalists society. Ultimately, Frost conveys the idea of the mans isolation from reality is disabling his ability to accept the 'truth' than leaving him restricted unable to be the same as other people.

Furthermore, Frost also emphasises through this imagery of the 'Birches' that the persona is out of touch with the real world. His life always swings from 'left to right' which Frost uses the analogy to convey the idea of the person's conflictions of going from past to reality. He is so caught up in not wanting to 'going back' that ultimately has left him unable to cope with the demands of the world and eventually has 'bend' his life.

However the enjambement within the poem is perhaps used by Frost to portray the battle and effort the persona is taking to fight with isolation. 'Birches' has left the persona away from other people, and as a result he suffers being out of touch with reality.

Another poem that conveys the theme as isolation and it proves to be more prominent his contact with other people as he is completely 'lonely' and away from human life. The title itself 'Desert pieces' is the epitomy of isolation as the 'Desert is just an 'empty' with nothing.

Isolation is very prominent here, as it is that what 'smothered' the persona as he is so isolated from its world. Isolation has left its persona with nothing to 'express' and what is what makes him so 'absent spirited'. Frost's conveys the idea of him isolating himself with nothing but 'snow' portraying this idea that he surrounds himself with purity, which implies his ability to survive in the real world as it is filled with 'benighted evilness'.

The poem 'Out, Out' involves isolation of a child's life from freedom. The use of sibilance of 'saw, shivered' depicts similarities to snakes, which are predators that isolate their preys, which in this, it is isolating this 'boy' from his rights to a childhood and freedom. This poem involves the contact with other people, as his isolation stems from the 'sis' he has to provide for. His contact with other people is what makes his 'freedom' spill out from his life ultimately making him a 'supper' of society.

In conclusion, Isolation is certainly more significant than contact with other people. In 'Birches' the persona is a victim of isolation from reality causing his inability to thrive in the real world. Whilst in 'Desert places' the persona is isolated from the world making him unable to change and adapt.

EXAMINER COMMENTARY

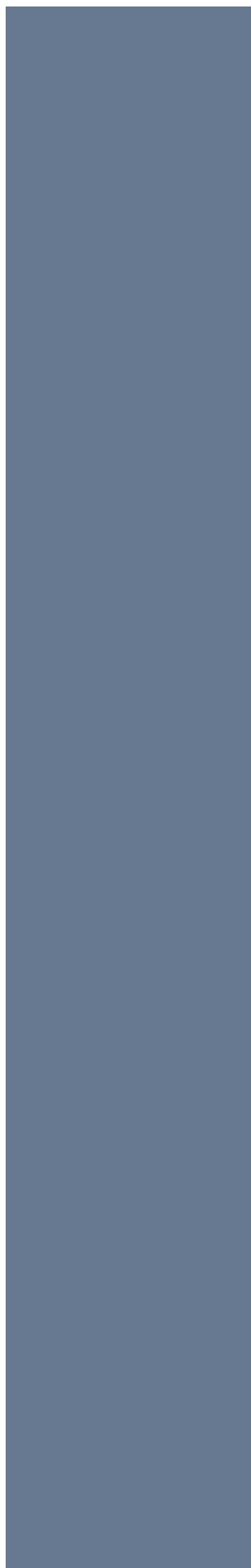
While there is some focus on the topic, the tendency is to offer assertions as interpretations. There are few effective links between the text and the focus of the question. Comments are generally imposed on the text rather than arising out of it. Three poems are chosen for discussion but by and large there is a lack of anything more than superficial observations.

AO1: The cultural context of isolation is taken up from the question and there is awareness that a response to poetry is being examined. The examples of lexical choices in the opening paragraph show awareness of a connection between the topic of isolation and the text, and so there is a sense of place as a cultural genre. The identification of features of form indicate a simple awareness of the genre.

AO2: Pointing out rhyme and the use of stanzas is very simple understanding. The comment on the title of 'Desert Places', some awareness of the use of locations, the attempt to find a symbol and imagery in 'Birches' and the general comment on enjambment indicate the basic level of the student's approach to method.

AO3: While the substance of the discussion is limited, debate is attempted as part of a commentary on the chosen poems. A simple sequence is used, but discourse markers indicate some shaping of the material. There is some loss of focus in the comments on shattering of ice in 'Birches' and the student struggles to make 'Out, Out – ' relevant, but the topic is kept in view for most of the answer.

Overall, this response is consistent with the Band 2 descriptors: simple and generalised.



FURTHER GUIDANCE AND CONTACTS

You can contact the subject team directly at english@oxfordaqaexams.org.uk

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