

NEW ZEALAND SCHOLARSHIP 2004

ENGLISH

QUESTION ONE: CLOSE READING OF UNFAMILIAR TEXTS

Write an essay comparing the treatment of a harsh physical environment in the following TWO passages. Pay close attention to the way each writer has crafted techniques such as the choice of vocabulary, phrasing, point of view, positioning of the reader, figurative language and structure to reinforce the content.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Outstanding Performance - Performance Descriptor 1

The texts 'Winter' by Steve Braunias and 'Whare' by Glenn Colquhoun both examine the more abstract and sentimental aspects of a harsh, physical environment – in this case, the coldness and sometimes bodily discomfort of winter. To Braunias, winter is something that makes us as people, a hardening, masculine force that exposes life at its most raw. He is impatient and aggressive in his portrayal of harsh physical environment. Colquhoun, on the other hand is much more introspective and personal in his treatment of winter. He distances himself from action and impatience, and is just appreciative and content.

Braunias begins with an ambiguous 'around the corner from my house' and goes on to paint us a picture of trees, houses and a lake. Already there is a strong sense of being outdoors, external and exposed to the elements. He then introduces the idea of seasons – and we see that his environment excites certain emotions in him. He calls summer 'bright' and 'childish' and associates autumn with a 'sadness'. Finally, he mentions winter and moves to 'now', 'this afternoon' – the present. To Braunias winter is a season that gets rid of pretense, that strips everything it touches down to its most raw state. He uses imagery to reinforce this idea – 'as bald as bones' to describe a tree that has been stripped bare. He is aggressive in his writing, an aggressiveness which he feels translates to the season. We see this through the use of his sometimes violent, provocative language, simple sentences such as 'bring it on', and informal words that are evocative of anger – 'damned'. Braunias is entirely masculine both in his writing and his treatment of winter. Winter is obviously the season which best corresponds to his state of mind, to his perception of life – he takes no pleasure in softness or drama. He calls Auckland 'too damned soft' and is clearly condescending toward exaggeration and dramatizing situations ('a dramatic bore'). Winter is not a season of hyperboles, after all. When Braunias says that winter 'makes us, it sorts out' he reinforces the idea of masculinity – one cannot help think of the cliché 'sorting the men from the boys'. At times, the author is almost accusational, especially with his use of rhetorical questions, which he double-barrels one after the other. 'Has the ice skating rink....frozen up yet? Is the Desert Road closed as it is every winter...?' Winter excites some sort of macho pride in him, even though he 'apologizes about being male about these things'. He refers to John Mulgan's 'Man Alone' where winter made life too uncomfortable to be dull. Perhaps this is what he wants the season to do for him. Perhaps he wants life (which he feels there is 'too much of') to be hardened, so that we too can be hardened, become 'heartless', an icy epitome of winter itself.

Perceptive understanding of content and tone of both passages clearly shown. Sets up for a critical discussion of both texts.

Consistently integrated discussion of content, tone and methods of crafting.

Colquhoun, on the other hand, is much less aggressive. His voice is soothing, introspective in his poem 'Whare'. He positions himself inside, internal, as opposed to Braunias' assertive outdoor position. Winter is something that is affecting just his world, not the whole world as it does for Braunias. He also takes a much less hardened stance – he writes not to convict (like Braunias) but to examine and to come to a gentle conclusion by doing so. His poem begins with the word 'if', already we see that he is passive, the 'if' connotes possibility at the same time as it distances the author from action. Colquhoun presents winter as something that causes him physical discomfort, that 'robs the heat from my fire' and 'pokes' it's cold 'finger on my skin'. He uses bodily imagery and metaphorical languages (similes) such as 'mouth like a child' and 'bulge like an armful of groceries' to show winter as some sort of physical intruder in his world. The imagery used is not fantastical or mystic, but rather comparisons with everyday things – 'elbow of this tin jersey'. Colquhoun goes on to present us with the other side of the story, as Braunias does not. These flaws in his house, his whare, which let winter and cold in, at the same time add character. And 'if' he 'fixes' them, then in advancement, he feels he will lose the essence of beauty things have when they are broken. Things like the holed walls that 'let in the cold', but that also talk to him of the places where they last stood'. Colquhoun is not impatient as Braunias is. He is able to see both sides of the argument, from both perspectives. And because of this, he comes to a peaceful conclusion, devoid of the frustration and momentum of Braunias – 'not wanting any more than this. Not wanting any less'.

Braunias is impatient and demanding, Colquhoun is content and gently examining. Each respond to the harsh physicality of their environment in very different ways.

First passage is discussed independently. Second passage is introduced comparatively. As discussion is developed, comparative points continue to be made.

A logical, economical and focused conclusion.

General Comments

Confident, sustained, academic discussion of both texts, coherently structured. Insightful understanding of both texts.

Sophisticated and intelligent use of language to articulate mature ideas eg. "he also takes a much less hardened stance – he writes not to convict but to examine and to come to a gentle conclusion by doing so".

QUESTION ONE: CLOSE READING OF UNFAMILIAR TEXTS continued

Sample of assessed candidate work – Performance Descriptor 2

You either love it, or you hate it. A majority of us are “the indoors type”; we like nothing better than a hot shower, a cup of milo and comfy seat in front of the television. However, we are not alone. In our society, there are a brave few who enjoy the winter, who enjoy the outdoors and who simply do not crave the creature comforts that a modern lifestyle imposes.

An example of this is found in the article “Winter” by Steve Braunias “what I really want is stink weather” he states, amidst claims Winter is “fantastic” and wishes that it were “more crucial, more disheartening”. Braunias’ use of first person narrative perspective, shows that he is fascinated by Winter, with an awe inspired respect. He uses similes such as ‘like a shell’ to describe the aspects of winter and winter’s effect on the scene, created by his imagery. “Theres always one boat parked in it”. “You could reach out and put it in your pocket”. Metaphors are also used, to show the authors view of how winter is “final”. He uses the metaphor of a solved crime, then a film to emphasize the idea that winter is final – and that’s what’s great about it. “Winter is case closed, roll credits, the end”. The clichéd image that creates in the readers mind helps to get his opinion across.

Steve Braunias’s use of imperatives such as “Bring it on. I can take” show the reader that winter is an opponent that he wishes to battle and conquer; though the contrasting closing paragraph shows that the author respects Winter – through use of complete sentences. ‘All this is winter as it should be. It wants to pick a fight’ “winter” is personified as “heartless” ‘profound’ “desolate” “stern” but he respects that: “and we all hear it, we all know what it means”.

A different treatment is used, however, in the poem ‘Whare” By Glenn Colquhoun. In this poem a stark and barren house is described and personified emotively – like an old friend. Coloquhouns first technique is repetition “if I fix” “if I”; He repeats the Statement “if I” to list possibilitys, saying “If I did this” or “If I did that” then such and such would happen – changing the shack from its original condition (which is obviously close to his heart). The repetition also signifys the fact that he is remembering and listing all the things he loves about “this old shell”. Glenn Colquhoun personifys the house giving the reader the ability to feel for the house as a person rather than an inanimate object “open its mouth like a child” “rob the heat from my fire” “talk to me”. By bringing the house to life the reader is able to imagine the experiences the author details more clearly.

Though this piece is in first person like “Winter”, more emotive adjectives are used to create beautiful imagery “fine webs tying it

Strong use of individual style in introduction. Begins in an engaging way but lacks a thesis statement.

Launches into discussion of second passage using economical style. Predominantly a discussion of crafting, with confident use of terminology, substantiated by detailed references to the text. Saves itself from being a list by the responsive comments regarding effect – eg “fascinated by winter with an awe-inspired respect.”

Transition to second text smooth, gives a sense of synthesis.

Makes comparative points linking it with first passage. Continues with style of discussion established with the first text.

together” “steady walls” “roughscar”. By adding the adjectives, Coloquhoun is adding another dimension to the way the reader feels, sees, and thinks about this shack. As in “Winter” the end stanza in this poem culminates the efforts of the previous stanzas and leaves the reader with a clear feeling an emotional moral.

“Not wanting any more than this. Not wanting any less”. The use of two simple, incomplete sentences so purely and delicately conveys the relationship between the author and the house, the use of repetition showing that there is balance and the use of the cliché “more or less” exemplifying the love.

Comparatively, these two texts “Winter” by Steve Braunias and “Whare” by Glenn Coloquhoun possess many of the same techniques; first person narrative, personification, repetition and imagery, But it is the way these techniques are implemented that express the feelings of the authors towards harsh physical environments.

Solid conclusion shows an awareness of structure, drawing passages together. Understands notion of critical response.

General Comments

Confident, fluent and engaging discussion with some lapses in expression, punctuation and spelling. Coherent argument with a clear sense of structure. Points are made, developed, substantiated and ordered in a logical fashion.

Balanced discussion of texts and a consistent approach adopted.

Weakness – discussion of ideas is inferred through discussion of techniques. Would have been strengthened by a more direct approach.

Direction unclear at first but gains strength as it develops.

QUESTION ONE: CLOSE READING OF UNFAMILIAR TEXTS continued

Sample of assessed candidate work – Performance Descriptor 4

In both “Winter” by Steve Braunias and “Whare” by Glenn Colquhoun, a harsh physical environment, as well as its effect on its inhabitant are described. “Winter” is a first person, present tense narrative that describes the Auckland Winter in comparison to other aspects of Winter in NZ, as well as the way in which Winter affects people and their behaviour. Contrastingly, “Whare” describes, through a prophetic first person narration, the way in which a Whare is battered by the elements, and while the impression is given that its environment has gotten the better of it, in reality it is the way in which the Whare gives in to the elements that gives it its character.

In this aspect, both texts are similar in that they both praise the way in which being in these harsh conditions builds character, whether it is in a building or a person. Here, both “Winter” and “Whare” explore the way in which the harsh physical environment affects its inhabitants. “Winter” is based around the way in which people put up with Winter conditions, and how our will to survive and our battles in the elements make us who we are. Braunias states: “We need winter. It makes us, sorts us out”.

Similarly, in “Whare” Colquhoun uses a comparison between the current physical state of the whare and the effect of altering this state, on both himself and the Whare. For example, (Stanza 1) “If I fix the step outside // it will not creak or bulge like an armful of groceries // ready to drop me”. This use of comparison reinforces the themes and content of the poem to the reader, not only through building a mental image of the physical attributes of the Whare, but also by appealing to the readers emphatic nature through the author’s obvious emotional connection. Furthermore, by their chosen point of narration and use of figurative language, each author is able to inject their own spirituality into their passage, and puts across their ideas more effectively. In “Whare” Maori spirit is quite obviously present, through Colquhoun’s titling of the poem “Whare”, his personification of the Whare having ‘ribs’ and a ‘belly’; a frequent Maori personification. That he mentions both the Whare’s heart as well as his own heart reinforces the connection between the two, and proposes that the harsh physical conditions not only give the whare its character, but also give him his own as well. He quite obviously considers the resilience of the Whare against these conditions the essence of its character, as does Braunias in “Winter”. As he describes the perceived physical changes of the boat from seeming “bright and childish” to “the kind of sadness you expect of Autumn” and having “Winter’s hard lines”. Here, the boat’s resiliency against the elements of seasonal change is also a strong indication of its character, and that Braunias later describes ‘proper’ Winter as being “an old-fashioned cold” and wanting to “pick a fight” further reinforces the common theme that resilience and respect against the harsh physical environment are character defining.

Both authors, however, reinforce their content differently in the ways in

A reasonable attempt to set up the contrast between the two passages. A recognition of tone and understanding of content is shown. Misuse of ‘prophetic’ an indicator there may be later problems.

Expands on thesis statement but a little repetitive. Only one crafting technique referred to by end of first page.

Some discussion of content supported by references but the point is not particularly well developed; not linked to methods of crafting. Some simplistic statements eg. ‘building a mental image’. Structural problems begin to emerge “furthermore by their chosen point...”.

A perceptive point about spirituality in the poem is made, but not sufficiently developed nor supported.

Shifts to the prose text but does not develop the idea set up earlier. Begins discussion on a new point that is not clearly established.

which they end their texts, as well as the way in which they portray themselves as part of the scene through their narration.

Firstly, Colquhoun reinforces himself as part of the text through describing the effects of making his own physical changes to himself, in comparison to those that could potentially destroy the essence of the Whare. In Stanza 7 he changes his narration from “if I the” to “If I fix this break in my heart” suggesting that he is truly party of the Whare, as well as that by physically changing ourselves/something/one else, we take away what is truly “them”.

Contrastingly, Braunias reinforces himself as part of the text by his criticism of how the weather is, and how he wants it to be.

Finally, the way in which both authors end their texts is important in respect to the treatment of a harsh environment, as different ideas are put across.

While in “Whare” the ending is obvious in the narrations content with the situation – “Not wanting any more than this // not wanting any less”, in “Winter” the author’s discontentment with the current environment contrasts with “Whare”, in that he believes that the environment is not all that it could be if it were to be truly character building.

To conclude, the treatment of a harsh physical environment is obviously respectful in both texts, in regards to the way in which the passages present the environment as being the essence of us, however whilst “Whare” shows content in the way in which the harsh environment does this, “Winter” quite obviously illustrates the author’s beliefs that the environment in Auckland is substandard. I found both to be provocative in their use of personification and figurative language, and thought both to be powerful images of the importance of nature to our spirituality and wellbeing.

Some vague ideas, focused on content rather than crafting, are being repeated, using imprecise and at times inaccurate expression.

Attempts to link texts and draw some conclusion.

General Comments

Generally fluent but some clumsiness of expression and misuse of words.
Structure – awareness of how essay should be structured, but not controlled as evidenced by paragraphing issues. Placement of statements and development of supporting material are at times disconnected.

Unbalanced discussion

- between content and methods of crafting (much more on content)
- use of textual references (more discussion of ‘Whare’)

Narrow response to question because of focus on content.

Evidence of personal response, understanding and engagement with text.

QUESTION TWO: RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

10. In the twenty-first century, what does Shakespeare have to offer us that is relevant and / or challenging and / or powerful and / or entertaining?

Refer closely to one or more Shakespearean texts you have studied.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Outstanding Performance - Performance Descriptor 1

In the twenty-first century Shakespeare's plays are still as relevant and powerful as they were during his time. Part of his genius lies in how plausible it is that the plays he wrote could take place today in the real world. The incredible talent he had of moulding and crafting the English language is what makes him so powerful.

Confident lively tone of introduction. Establishes central thesis: that plausibility of content and language make Shakespeare relevant and powerful today.

In 'Hamlet' King Claudius murdered his brother in order to succeed him as king and marry his wife. Is this really so hard to believe in the present day? A man undermines or harms his brother in order to gain reward. Human nature has not changed a great deal in the 440 years since Shakespeare was born. We are still greedy, still selfish, still willing to sacrifice others for material gain. The fact that Claudius murders one of his own family may be shocking and unbelievable at first glance, yet if one steps back from the situation and considers events that are taking place today it is not so unreal. As fake as "the Jerry Springer Show" is, and how devoid it is of viewing value, millions of Americans still watch it and believe the crazy, often sex related, family antics. Prince Hamlet may even describe them as "incestuous, murderous, damned" Americans, living in the "rank sweat of an enseamed bed". Shakespeare is drama, as are "Jerry Springer", action movies, television programmes and many other forms of visual entertainment. We saw murderous betrayal in "The Sopranos" when Tony Soprano killed cousin Tony Blundetto to maintain family honour. Is that better or worse than killing your brother to marry his wife and become King? Claudius gains more from his actions than Tony Soprano does and we believe that Tony could do it. We could see it happening in the real world, so it surely cannot be hard to imagine a modern-day Claudius. It is this plausibility that maintains Shakespeare's relevance to the twenty-first century.

Structure: each paragraph links directly back to the central thesis.

To take that point further, "Othello" is a tale of a jealous, passionate man who kills his wife for her supposed infidelity. It plays out just like an Aaron Spelling soap-opera, or "Days of our Lives", or one of the many other melodramas on screen today. What about Iago, the diabolic cynic who rips Othello and Desdemona apart for sheer pleasure, for the sport of it? Catty, pathetic girls do the same thing at schools throughout the country today, though not such a grand scale. Who would believe Cassio, the man whose soldiership is "mere prattle without practice", being promoted ahead of the veteran Iago? Nowadays we have young people with tertiary qualifications being promoted above those who have worked hard all their lives. Shakespeare is still as relevant as he ever was.

Wide-ranging, free-flowing essay that consistently makes links between today's world and the themes in Shakespeare's plays: a confident integration of past and present texts.

The power and entertainment he offers is in the delight of studying and hearing his characters speak. Shakespeare wrote the majority of each play in 'blank verse' or iambic pentameter. Though Christopher Marlowe first established it as the standard form of Elizabethan dramatic prose it was Shakespeare who crafted his works into aural masterpieces. The rhythm and vivid expression that he used deliver messages straight into the listeners' hearts and minds. Hamlet reverentially describes his father as 'a combination and a form indeed, / where every god did seem to set his seal, / to give the world assurance of a man.' Not only is the imagery vivid and poetic, the rhythm is near-perfect. After learning of Desdemona's supposed adultery Othello exclaims that he does not want to keep his very essence as "a foul cistern for toads to knot and gender in". Examples of such vibrant and provoking imagery abound in all of Shakespeare's tragedies. The many themes he used of animals, appearance vs. reality, and black vs. white (to name but a few) were where most of his best figurative language comes from. Iago's juxtaposition of black and white when he says of Desdemona: 'so will I turn her virtue into pitch" is one many simple phrases he has that are brilliant and highly effective. He tells Brabantia "an old black ram is tugging your white ewe" which is - while crude - very vivid and provocative. It achieves just the effect he desires. The sheer angry force with which Hamlet scolds his mother Gertrude is yet another display of the power of Shakespeare. 'Nay, but to live in the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, honeying and making love over the nasty sty-.'" Or when he verbally attacks Claudius: "A murderer, a villain, a king of shreds and patches!" The refined genius of Shakespeare's wordplay alone is more than enough to make him valuable in the twenty-first century.

Shakespeare is still relevant today because he was able to describe the human condition, create incredibly complex and multi-layered characters, then put them in plots and storylines that are still plausible today. The majestic elegance and craftsmanship of his verse is the power that drives his plays into the twenty-first century.

Second half of essay focuses on language. Demonstrates a detailed knowledge of a range of relevant texts and high level of critical response.

Confident discussion of terminology and the effect created by crafting methods.

Conclusion stylishly encapsulates the essence of the argument.

General Comments

Wide-ranging critical references.
 Coherent focused discussion.
 Highly engaging in style and argument.
 Seamless interweaving of textual references.
 Fresh, original approach to subject matter shows independent thought.

QUESTION TWO: RESPONSE TO LITERATURE continued

10. In the twenty-first century, what does Shakespeare have to offer us that is relevant and / or challenging and/ or powerful and / or entertaining?

Refer closely to one or more Shakespearean texts you have studied.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Performance Descriptor 3

In contemporary society, we may draw many enlightening facts and challenging ideas from William Shakespeares work. Shakespeare was always highly fascinated by the human condition and behaviour, and it is from his insistent portrayal of aspects of these that we may continue to perpetually attain knowledge from.

Introduction acknowledges question but does not clearly articulate a thesis.

In Shakespeare’s Othello, the main ideas of the power of jealousy, love and human behaviour in light of these emotions can challenge us, and cause us to consider our own behaviour in response to these aspects of human nature. Firstly, the behaviour of Iago, Cassio and Othello as a result of jealousy challenges us to review our own behaviour when we may have been faced with a potentially similar situation. Secondly, that Othello and, to a certain extent Emelia and Brabantio “loved not wisely, but too well” is challenging in that it also causes us to think about the way we respond to love, and other things connected to it. Finally, the fact that human behaviour has not altered over such a period of time, and that ‘Othello’ could potentially be set in any time period highlights to the audience the predictable nature of human behaviour. All of these aspects of Othello are relevant to modern-day society, and are both challenging and entertaining to the audience.

Firstly, the reflection of the emotion jealousy in the characters of Iago, Cassio and Othello are evidence to the audience of the potential for emotion to ruin us.

Human beings are the only species in the world who kill purely out of male (and female) sexual power – jealousy, and are not conservative of their own species.

That Cassio gets the Lieutenants job over Iago is the ultimate catalyst for all of the jealous behavior in the play, as well as for the tragedy of it. Iago becomes insanely jealous of Cassio and sets out to ruin him, as well as ruining Othello, and everyone else! Here, an example of what is contemporarily known as “tall poppy syndrome”. That Iago cannot be content with seeking revenge on just Cassio, who after all, is the one who took his job, is further indicative of the greed in human nature, and is powerful in the way that, it too, is an aspect of human society that knows no boundaries.

Knowledge of key ideas in text evident, consistent linking back to question.

Secondly, Shakespeares observations and illustrations of the capacity for love in the human condition are challenging in the way that they remind us of what it is to love, and to be and/or want to be loved, are are portrayed to us through Othello and, to a certain extent Emelia and Brabantio. Brabantio “loved not wisely, but too well” in that he spoilt his only daughter Desdemona, giving her free rein which ultimately drove

Intelligent use of vocabulary but problems with control of syntax.

her away from him. Iago informed him of Desdemona & Othello's secret marriage – "now, even now and old black ram is tupping your white ewe", and Brabantio comes too realise his mistake, which provokes thought in the audience too. Furthermore, Emilia illustrates to us the mistake we can make of "loving too well", and of wanting to be loved, through her foolish betrayal of Desdemona (and Othello) for Iago. By stealing Desdemona's handkerchief in order to get some attention from Iago, Emilia challenges the audience to reflect upon their own experiences with love. Additionally, we find powerful the idea of Othello loving Desdemona so much that he cannot even confront her about her alleged love affair with Cassio.

Furthermore, that Othello wants for her to 'remain perfect' in appearance and reputation so much so that he kills her, reminds the audience of the power of love, and the human capacity for it.

Furthermore, Othello's desire for the maintenance of reputation, both his and Desdemona's, is reflected by Cassio, who, after fighting drunkenly with Montano (even though he was fuelled by the perpetually jealous & manipulative Iago) proclaims "reputation, reputation, reputation, oh! I have lost my reputation...and what remains is bestial". This, centuries on, is still an important aspect of human behaviour, and much of our behaviour depends on the preservation of our reputation.

Finally, that such themes and aspects of society can be reflected throughout history, from the time Shakespeare addressed them to now, 600+ years on, challenges the audience to consider the resilience of the human condition, and the way in which it is ingrained in us.

To conclude, in contemporary society, Shakespeare's deep fascination with human behaviour and his depictions of his observations through his work such as his presentation of jealousy, love and the importance of reputation to society, both historic and contemporary, challenge the audience to consider their own behaviour, and provides the audience with powerful reflections of their own emotional potential, as well as of society. Shakespeare's works are, and always will be, a strong mirror image of the behaviour and capacity of human society throughout time.

General Comments

Sound knowledge of text, well substantiated.

Critical response to text.

Continued references to Shakespeare as challenging without ever really expanding on what that idea means in today's society.

Independent reflection on Shakespeare's relevance to today's society.

Coherent structure, but a tendency to be laboured.

QUESTION TWO: RESPONSE TO LITERATURE continued

6. Owen Marshall has said of the short story, 'There is space for the reader's creative response ... the best [short] stories are the result of collaboration between reader and writer.'

Discuss how short stories you have studied invite this collaboration with the reader.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Performance Descriptor 4

Katherine Mansfield is a New Zealand short story writer whose celebrated literary works are the result of 'collaboration between reader and writer'. The two short stories Miss Brill and The Wind Blows invite collaboration with the reader through the crafted techniques of interior monologue and symbolism. These techniques allow the reader to perceive the theme of isolation and to relate to the characters of lonely Miss Brill and confused Matilda who find themselves on the periphery of society.

In Mansfield's 1921 short story Miss Brill the use of interior monologue portrays the protagonist's inner thoughts. Mansfield ingeniously switches between third person narrative and interior monologue to provide the reader with an insight into Miss Brill's thought processes and emotions. 'Dear little thing! It was nice to feel it again' Miss Brill remarks to herself when the touch of the fur ground her neck brings back memories of when she removed the fur from its box that morning. Miss Brill was filled with delight to see her fur again. To Miss Brill, it is a cherished possession, a beloved friend. As Mansfield describes Miss Brill's reaction to her fur, the reader is invited to remember old acquaintances of their own.

Thus the reader understands the significance of the fur to Miss Brill. Her loneliness is presented by the fact that she befriends an inanimate object. The reader will know that the fur is in fact Miss Brill's single companion. Stream of consciousness is used again to convey Miss Brill's thoughts as she watches the passers by from a bench in the Jardins Publique, 'And when she breathed, something light and sad –no, not sad, exactly – something gentle seemed to move in her bosom'. Collaboration from the reader is required for the true meaning of this statement to be expressed. If one imagines the feeling of something 'light and sad' but almost 'gentle', one will realize that Miss Brill is experiencing loneliness. She denies that she is lonely but it is clear that she is alone and that she has a deep desire to belong.

Interior monologue is again employed in The Wind Blows. The main character is an adolescent girl named Matilda. She is caught between the adult world and childhood. Mansfield invites the reader in to the heart of this story by using a plunge opening of Matilda's interior monologue, 'It is all over! What is? Oh everything!' This displays Matilda's confused state and her disarray of emotions. The reader immediately wants to find out the cause for this disdain and is ergo inspired to read further. Matilda finds that she is isolated from the normalities of society. She rebels against the conforming adult world,

Introduction acknowledges the question but shows limited understanding of its scope.

Knowledge and understanding of the stories, awareness of some of the crafting methods; problems linking knowledge to the intention of the question.

'No mother. I do not see why I should,' but she simultaneously scorns childish behaviour, 'the stupid – she's blushing! How ridiculous'. The turmoil of Matilda's emotions culminates inside her and is expressed as desperation and anger, 'How hideous life is – revolting, simply revolting.' Interior monologue provides the reader with a depth of understanding of Matilda which is essential for the reader's personal creative response. Mansfield communicates through Matilda's stream of consciousness to the reader in order to present Matilda's world of turmoil.

Mansfield employs the technique of symbolism to further connect with her readers. Ian Gordon refers to this distinctive quality as 'Mansfield's unobtrusive but powerful use of symbolism.' In Miss Brill the box is a dominant symbol. Firstly, we learn that Miss Brill had taken her fur 'out of its box that afternoon' and 'rubbed the life back into its dim little eyes.' This symbol evokes a creative response from the reader because a parallel exists between Miss Brill and her fur. They both emerged from their restrictive 'boxes' and needed the life rubbed back into them before embarking on their Sunday excursion. In another of Mansfield's short stories The Doll's House the reader is again invited to collaborate with the writer through the use of symbolism. A parallel is portrayed comparing the 'stiff' parent dolls, and the children who are really 'too big' for the doll's house, to the reality of the Burnell family.

Apart from the parallel that box symbolism creates, the box imagery is also extended to the people in the Jardins Publiques. As Miss Brill observes the elderly people in the park who sit 'still as statues' on benches, she concludes that 'they'd just come from dark little rooms, or even – even cupboards'. This intriguing symbolism invites the reader's imagination to explore the world of these elderly people. They are closed off from the real world by their confining 'boxes'. The rest of society dis regards them as useless obstacles. The box symbol can even be extended to represent a coffin in which the elderly people stay, waiting for death. Ironically, Miss Brill is the perfect example of the old people she criticises. She too has no connections with the outside world and is isolated in her own little world. In the Miss Brill returns to 'her dark little room – her room like a cupboard' and thus the reality of Miss Brill's lonesome existence is revealed.

The Wind Blows is said to be Mansfield's 'most purely symbolist' of stories. The wind serves as an extended metaphor that represents Matilda's initiation into adulthood. 'It is only the wind shaking the house, rattling the windows...making her bed tremble' but it is enough to disturb Matilda. The exterior motion of the wind 'in clouds, in waves' parallels Matilda's inner turmoil of emotions. The wind is an elemental force which cannot be controlled, just as Matilda cannot harness her jumble of feelings. The parallels presented by wind symbolism invite collaboration with the reader, as the reader is allowed to experience the inner most personality of this teenaged girl. 'A loud roaring sound' makes reference to Matilda's inner conflict of childhood versus adulthood and allows the reader to grasp the extent of her fury of emotions.

Use of pat phrases (either from the question or from their study of the text), which are not developed, cast doubts on the candidate's understanding of both question and crafting of the text.

Hence, Katherine Mansfield's short stories Miss Brill and The Wind Blows successfully collaborate with the reader through the techniques of interior monologue and symbolism. Cherry Hawkin said of Mansfield that 'she loved looking at the relationship of isolated individuals'. The reader is able to perceive the relationship of Miss Brill and Matilda with themselves and thus experience the reality of Miss Brill's loneliness and Matilda's confusion.

General Comments

Despite continual references to the question, little evidence of understanding of the significance of the question.

- A narrow interpretation of the question.
- Knowledge of texts.
- References to methods of crafting.

Reasonably fluently expressed.

QUESTION THREE: EXPLORING ISSUES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

18. 'What we see as readers depends on the personal and cultural backgrounds we bring to reading.' (Witi Ihimaera)

Use this quotation as the starting point for a discussion of the interaction between readers (or audiences) and the texts they encounter.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Outstanding Performance - Performance Descriptor 1

What a reader sees in literature does depend on their personal and cultural background. What is more significant is that the literature itself is, at least in part, a product of the culture that it is written in the context of. New Zealand literature for example is very idiosyncratic due to the uniqueness of New Zealand culture which has been shaped by our history, tradition and isolation. N.Z. literature offers a common medium through which it can communicate with its New Zealand audience and reveal the unique facets of N.Z. culture.

Probably the most common aspect of N.Z. literature (apart from most of it being written in English) is the heavy reliance and use of N.Z. landscape and scenery. This country's landscape and coastline are an active part of its residents lives and serve as the common medium through which the New Zealand writer communicates. James K. Baxter used scenes from the bush, mountain ranges and beaches extensively in the exposition of his theological philosophy through his poems. For example, in 'Haast Pass' the white snowy peak of the mountain "is like an altar cloth". Peter Jackson's use of New Zealand scenery for setting scene and creating impact in the 'Lord of the Rings' would only be a recent example of a film. 'Willow', 'Goodbye Porkpie' and 'Sleeping Dogs' based on C.K. Steads novel "Smiths Dream", all use travelogues of New Zealand scenery extensively. But this is only the common medium that N.Z. literature uses in order to communicate more easily with a NZ audience about the ideas of N.Z. culture.

Since the mid 19th century N.Z. has been an escape for immigrants seeking freedom from the social stratification of Great Britain. James Belich and the poet and historian Keith Sinclair have documented well the reasons for and the nature of the rise of egalitarianism in N.Z. society. An example of evidence for this would be the rise of the Liberal party in 1891, their socialist oriented policies were a first in the world. A visiting Englishman during the 1890's commented "New Zealand is less a country of socialist theorising than socialist practice". This situation has more or less survived till the present day. There are few examples of acknowledgement of solid class divisions in N.Z. literature, in contrast to foreign literature like British. This has never been popular and indicates that concrete social stratification is not an active part of peoples lives. What few examples exist like Alan Duffs "Once Were Warriors" and the most notable study on class divisions in N.Z. "One Night Out Stealing", as well as Katherine Mansfield's short

Introduction provides an interpretation of the question and the key ideas contained within; moreover an angle is offered which shows evidence of independent thought and a sophisticated ability to engage with ideas. The candidate has established a context of New Zealand literature for a discussion of the relationship between culture and literature.

Focuses on an aspect and draws on a range of examples from a breadth of literature as supporting evidence.

Social history used to contextualise material.

stories lead us to conclusions against class. Egalitarianism relates well with N.Z. audiences but it has another congruent key feature of N.Z. culture reflected in its literature. This is the idea of not relying on society to dictate and produce values and strict social behaviour.

Much of N.Z.'s major literature is anti-conditioning, which is part of the cause of a strict code of behaviour that still exists in abundance in the rest of the world and in New Zealand. In Goodbye Porkpie the main protagonist is a proponent of antisocial behaviour. In his work Frank Sargeson, in many ways the father of N.Z.'s modern literature, dealt with the experience of minority groups using a Kiwi idiom. Another prominent figure Kevin Ireland promotes the philosophy of hedonism in his poetry. His portrayal of society and peoples behaviour as something almost mechanical may indicate him being familiar with the social biological work The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins. This is possible as in "Scaling a Fish" he plays around with the mathematical chaos theory. In "Man of Merit" he criticizes the common pattern of the stereotypical family man. "Unable to subvert existence by a fumbling accidental inconsistency...merely alive, perfectly adapted to a duty to survive". It is obvious too by Sam Hunt's personal life and by his poetry that he spurns the normal pattern of living. "They ask me why I travel and never settle down, I lose two games of pool and hitchhike out of town". As well as this he deals with socials issues and questions society by describing it's response to them. In 'Girl With Black Eye in Grocers Shop" Hunt examines domestic violence and describes the response of the observers.

New Zealand literature and hence the culture of its population is a rare and unique blend of hedonism, and anti-conditioning sentiment and does not rest strongly on any particular religion. This indication for impulsiveness and dislike of stringent behaviour models is probably one of the factors responsible for the conflict with immigrants from Asia and other countries whose hostile human environments have meant the development of concrete and demanding cultures for survival. New Zealand has lacked this selective pressure and it is probably the uniqueness of its resulting culture that is the reason rest of the world does not relate to N.Z. literature as well as N.Z.

A focused discussion drawing on a wide range of literature, from poetry to prose to film and social commentary.

General Comments

Introduction provides an interpretation of the question and the key ideas contained within; moreover, an angle is offered which shows evidence of independent thought and a sophisticated ability to engage with ideas. The candidate has established a context of New Zealand literature for a discussion of the relationship between culture and literature.

The essay is structured around aspects of New Zealand society and the way they are represented in literature (eg scenery, class, behaviour). This means the candidate's essay is clearly driven by the argument. Each aspect is developed with an extensive range of literary references. The

candidate is shown to be widely read and able to discuss the topic with confidence and intelligence. This structure synthesizes the discussion of texts to advance the thesis and therefore demonstrates consistent independent thought.

In question three, the outstanding essay will keep the argument central. The parameters of the essay and the issues involved will be fleshed out in considerable detail. The essay will be driven by the argument rather than an in-depth discussion of single texts.

QUESTION THREE: EXPLORING ISSUES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE continued

16. Can literature and / or language be both politically correct **and** challenging? Discuss with reference to a range of texts you have studied.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Performance Descriptor 2

Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice' and William Shakespeares 'Hamlet' are texts that are politically correct at the same time as they are deeply challenging, about society as well as human nature. Jane Austen blankets the subversive qualities of her novel in a fictional love story that conceals her sometimes acidic commentary on the society of her time – Shakespeare, on the other hand, presents us a play that is set in neither a specific time nor place but portrays universal, timeless and challenging ideas. Controversy in Hamlet only arises in it's portrayal, not from the purest form of the text itself.

Jane Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813, a time of great social change in her homeland England. The novel is also set in this age – known as the regency Period, where Prince Regent deputized for his mad father George III. The French revolution the previous century had resulted in an ongoing war between Britain and France. English internal relations were also volatile. The middle-class voice was growing, becoming very loud in the ears of the aristocrats and upper class. The land-owning gentry were constantly threatened by middle class 'upstarts' who had made their fortunes not as a result of inheritances but through trade. A superficial reading of Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice' would suggest that this passed the quiet rector's daughter by. Not so. *Pride and Prejudice*, although on the surface politically correct and fairly innocuous, does not comply with the genteel conventions of its day by any means. It is a quietly subversive text in its own right, with Austen commenting through her characters and their situations, on the politics of her day and her opinion of them. She shows the upper class to be rigid in their snobbery through Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Darcy's aunt, who she portrays as the essence of all self-infatuated egocentricity. The feisty Elizabeth, with 'playful disposition that delighted in anything ridiculous' is a feminist in her own right – a strong force for moral change in her fictional society. Austen demeans the system of patronage by presenting odious caricatures of pompous self-congratulation such as William Collins as legitimate and respected clergy of the English church. However, Austen cloaks these politically incorrect aspects of her novel in story of love and 'happily ever-afters' – so much so that few notice the bits of wire they swallow with the cotton-candy, fairytale plot. In this way, Austen's novel 'Pride and Prejudice' is both politically correct and challenging.

Shakespeare side-steps the issue of political correctness, or rather chooses not to make it relevant, in his revenge tragedy *Hamlet*. He does so by giving it no definite setting or period and portrayal themes and ideas 'beyond the reaches of our souls', that have no historical expiration date and that can be remodeled and reinterpreted to fit each new generation. In fact, it is only in the portrayal of a Shakespearean play that there is any capacity for political incorrectness. *Hamlet*, both the play and the character himself have been moulded and reshaped in many different ways and in many different performances. *Hamlet* has been portrayed as a Gothic, insecure teenager, and at the other extreme as a man incestuously in love with his mother, committing murder and slaying Claudius because of some Oedipus complex rather than to avenge his father. During the Vietnam War, *Hamlet* became a mouthpiece for conscientious objectors as a paragon of non-violence. As mentioned, it is only in the portrayal that *Hamlet* becomes controversial, in it's ability to, chameleon-like,

Acknowledges the question, but does not 'unpack' it, particularly the interpretation of 'politically correct' when dealing with pre-20th century texts.

Perceptive and confident discussion of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Again, side-steps what is actually meant by 'political correctness' in discussion.

adopt the ... of each new wave of people or ideas. As well as this, Hamlet is challenging, especially in the questions it raises about death and the nature of the afterlife and moral obligation of the sort the ghost burdens Hamlet with. In choosing to make its setting general and unspecific, Shakespeare has liberated his characters and the themes of the play from becoming anachronistic. Hamlet is one of Shakespeare's most challenging plays, primarily because we identify with the protagonist in a way we cannot with Lear, Macbeth, Othello or Romeo. Hamlet's situations humanise him, and we therefore relate to him – we also relate the challenging ideas he confronts.

Both 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Hamlet' are texts that hint at political correctness while being, at first appearance, utterly uncontroversial. Austen does so through cleverly-employed deception, whilst Shakespeare gives the reader a vehicle by which the challenging Hamlet can be interpreted to become politically incorrect.

General Comments

Candidate responds briefly to the topic and introduces the texts and the approach that will be taken. This essay goes on to be a strong comparative discussion of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Hamlet*. The candidate has a highly engaging style of writing. The essay is a coherent and well-substantiated discussion of the texts, showing how both texts challenge accepted thinking. The candidate is precluded from the highest band by paying insufficient attention to the ideas that lie at the heart of this topic. The introduction does little to flesh out what is understood by political correctness and given that the candidate is applying a contemporary idea to discuss classic literature, this is a weakness with the essay. The essay is driven by a discussion of the individual texts rather than a discussion of the ideas. Nevertheless there is strong evidence of independent and mature thought and the ability to apply criticism to literature.

QUESTION THREE: EXPLORING ISSUES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE continued

20. 'The skill with which text is constructed must charm us before we consider the issues it raises.' (Chris Price)

Use this quotation as a starting point for discussion of the relative importance of form and content in a range of texts you have studied.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Performance Descriptor 4

Every text is comprised of two parts; its content and its presentation. Chris Price said that 'The skill with which text is constructed must charm us before we consider the issues it raises'. Through a variety of genres and time periods, it appears that both form and content are significant but that the relative importance of form and content varies between each individual text.

The 1993 New Zealand film The Piano initially intrigues the viewers with the technique of costume. This visual form allows the audience to perceive the characters of the film and the theme of colonial attitudes and values. The two main male characters portray contrasting costume. Stewart, the husband of the protagonist Ada who is shipped over to the New Zealand West Coast to take part in their arranged marriage, dresses in a stiff collared shirt, waistcoat and top hat. Impractical as this costume is in the wild New Zealand bush, Stewart insists on looking 'proper' and refuses to let his standards slip. His costume portrays his reluctance towards change and thus the viewer grasps an understanding of his constricted, reserved character. Baines is the antithesis to Stewart and is shown wearing a loose shirt and wide-brimmed straw hat. His acceptance of the New Zealand environment and adoption of the local culture illustrate his perceptive, understanding character. In a visual text such as The Piano, much of its success relies on its visual skills. The technique of costume in The Piano is used to portray the characters' nature and hence provide the content of the film. This text supports Chris Price's view of the initial importance of form. However, for the remainder of the film, the content of the characters take over in importance.

One of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies Othello displays the combined importance of form and content. As with any live performance, the theatrical play of Othello relies greatly on form. The presentation of characters and themes must intrigue the audience and appeal to their emotions. Shakespeare uses asides and soliloquies to involve his audience. As in many Shakespearean dramas, Iago's soliloquies in Othello create dramatic irony which charms the audience by making them aware of Iago's plot. Only the audience is aware of Iago's evil, conniving plans and yet they can only wait in anguish to watch Iago's deception destroy the other characters. Nevertheless, when Othello is analysed from a literature critic's point of view, the content becomes increasingly important. For example the idea behind Iago's character of appearance versus reality is discovered in all its intricacy. Thus, on a deeper level,

Introduction acknowledges the topic but reiterates it rather than establishes what it means in the context of the texts to be discussed. A discussion of the premise at the heart of the question is essential for this essay to succeed, however this essay sidesteps the issue.

Text is discussed individually and there is a vague attempt to link back to the question. The link between text and topic is tenuous at best.

Links between texts is weak.

when one attempts to grasp the text's full meaning, content has the greater importance.

Maya Angelou's autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is a gripping account of Angelou's diverse experiences. The content comprises themes of survival and racism. Angelou's style of writing is simple and straightforward in order to clearly convey the content of her literature. The Pianist is a film directed by Roman Polanski which takes the same approach to relating content. The genre of non-fiction seems to rely more on its content than its form.

Thus, both form and content are important to a text. I agree with Chris Price's view that skill is needed to 'charm' a reader or viewer initially but it is clear that a text's true worth lies in its content.

The texts are diverse and there seems to be little that connects them.

A pat ending that does little to consolidate any argument.

General Comments

Introduction acknowledges the topic but reiterates it rather than establishes what it means in the context of the texts to be discussed. A discussion of the premise at the heart of the question is essential for this essay to succeed, however, this essay sidesteps the issue.

The candidate goes on to discuss three texts. Each text is discussed individually and there is a vague attempt to link back to the question. The link between texts and topic is tenuous at best. Moreover, the link between the texts is weak. The texts are diverse and there seems to be little that connects them. This candidate has put the texts at the centre of the argument, analysed an aspect of each independently and then attempted to link them back to the question. The overall effect is a fragmented essay of three unrelated texts rather than a synthesised argument.

What is apparent from the essay is an understanding of individual texts and the methods used in crafting them. The candidate has demonstrated the ability to critically analyse the ideas in these individual texts. The essay is not written with any degree of confidence, however, and the argument is not engaging, despite the candidate's knowledge.