LITERATURE IN ENGLISH (920/1)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

In Semester 1, 68 candidates sat for the examination of this subject and 85.29% of them obtained a full pass.

The percentage of each grade is as follows:

Grade	A	A–	B+	B	B–	C+	C	C–	D+	D	F
Percentage	8.82	10.29	16.18	26.47	2.94	16.18	4.41	4.41	2.94	4.41	2.94

PAPER 920/1 (*POEMS AND MALAYSIAN SHORT STORIES*)

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

General Comments

This paper is based on selected poems prescribed in the syllabus, as well as short stories taken from the Malaysian Short Stories collection. There are a total of four questions divided into three sections. Section A: Critical Appreciation provides candidates with the choice of answering a question based on either the poems or the short stories. Sections B (Poems) and C (Short Stories) do not provide options, and candidates must attempt the question set accordingly.

Overall, students tended to fall within the 'average' band. Those who performed particularly poorly were those who did not answer all three questions or who clearly had not been taught the subject. There were more students who could be considered 'excellent' compared to last year. In general, students need to spend more time contemplating what the question actually asks for and perhaps sketching out a focused plan on how to respond to that demand. The candidates' use of English varies widely, with some on the lowest end having trouble constructing grammatical and idiomatic sentences, while those on the higher end are able to write fluently and confidently with minimal errors.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION A: *Critical Appreciation*

Question 1

The question requires candidates to examine specific instances in the poem 'To Autumn' where the season is personified as a woman. This necessitates an understanding of the concept of personification. They should then analyse how the poet emphasises or clarifies his ideas about Autumn through the use of personification. For instance, when the poem describes Autumn as 'conspiring' with the sun, it creates an impression of an active and benevolent personality intentionally orchestrating a bountiful harvest. Similarly, when Autumn's hair is gently lifted by the wind, it suggests the soft and gentle beauty of the season.

In an exemplary answer, the candidate identifies that the personification of Autumn establishes a connection between the season and Demeter, the goddess of the harvest. The candidate goes on to demonstrate how the visual imagery in the poem imbues 'lady' Autumn with 'casual grace,' further reinforcing this link with the figure of Demeter. The candidate also observes the 'patient look' on Autumn's face and suggests that it implies a 'sweet and pleasant' personality, once again drawing a connection to Demeter and the 'sweet kernel' for which she is responsible. This is a strong response not only because it analyses the chosen images but also paints an overarching picture of the poem's themes.

Average answers to question 1 tended to identify examples of personification but offered limited discussion. For instance, one candidate pointed out the description of Autumn as 'sitting careless on a granary floor' and suggested that it implied tiredness. However, this response failed to analyse the use of 'careless' as a descriptor. Rather than indicating tiredness, 'careless' suggests relaxation, comfort, and a lack of worry. The candidate also mentioned the line 'Thy hair lifted by the winnowing wind' as an example of personification without providing further analysis. It would have been more insightful if the candidate had noticed the soft and gentle alliteration of the 'w' sound, which mirrors the gentle movement of the wind.

Question 2

The question requires candidates to demonstrate how the events witnessed by the little girl bring out the suffering of the woman next door. It is crucial that candidates do not merely explain what the woman is going through; rather, they must emphasise that the little girl 'narrates' the events in a straightforward manner because she does not understand what is happening. Through her simple narration, we can pick up clues about the woman's state of mind. For example, we learn that the mother weeps over her baby, the grandfather continually shouts angrily, the baby gets taken away, and the mother rocks the empty cradle while singing. Although the little girl offers no commentary on these events, we can piece together the information to understand that the baby has been sold because she is a girl, and the mother is left to mourn alone.

An example of a strong answer highlights that the writer conveys the suffering of the mother 'by providing a detailed description of the Chinese woman's behaviour from the perspective of a child.' The candidate also notes that 'the little girl saw how the Chinese woman would keep quiet when the men in the house are talking.' To properly answer the question, it is important to focus on observations as filtered through the girl's viewpoint.

Average answers tended to focus more on discussing the mother's suffering in a direct and straightforward manner. For instance, one candidate notes that the writer 'uses the contrast between her having the baby and not having the baby as a form of suffering she faces.' However, this response does not reference the role of the little girl as the one conveying the relevant information to the readers. Another issue arises when candidates add largely irrelevant moralising to their answers, such as 'I personally learn that we should cope with suffering and move on if we want growth.' Such statements do not serve to answer the question or illuminate the text.

SECTION B: *Poems*

Question 3

For question 3, candidates are required to examine different ways in which aging is presented in at least two poems. Candidates need to select appropriate poems that directly address aging. They should then discuss a variety of issues, such as the poet/speaker's attitude toward aging. Do they perceive it as positive, negative, or simply inevitable? Do they discuss it in terms of physical, mental, or spiritual aspects? Are they addressing it in relation to themselves, other people, or both?

Most students managed to respond at least at an average standard, as this theme appears in several poems (Hardy, Masefield, Shakespeare, George). However, some selections were less appropriate, such as "Piano" by D.H. Lawrence and Spenser's "Sonnet 75." "Piano" focuses less on aging and more on nostalgia and the power of memory, while "Sonnet 75" discusses the power of poetry to 'immortalise' its subject. An effective answer to this question should not only discuss the concept of aging but also demonstrate how the poet's use of poetic language conveys this idea.

A very strong answer explains that the line 'When yellow leaves or few or none do hang' 'allows the reader to understand how slowly but surely the trees lose their leaves to autumn and, metaphorically, us humans to aging. The poet successfully uses a simple metaphor to simplify the process of aging in the reader's eye, making aging appear less daunting.' This answer encapsulates both technique and theme.

SECTION C: *Malaysian Short Stories*

Question 4

For question 4, candidates are required to examine how fatherhood is depicted in two short stories. This necessitates selecting stories in which fathers play a central role and interact with their offspring, allowing us to

see how they function as fathers. Candidates should be able to assess the quality of their relationships with their children, thus suggesting their effectiveness as fathers.

Once again, most answers met an average standard. There was a tendency to oversimplify, stating that 'a good father is like this; therefore, this person is a bad father.' This tendency was particularly noticeable in relation to the story "Ratnamuni," where the father-son relationship is extremely complex. Many candidates labelled Muniandy as a bad father without considering the fact that he is not Ratnam's biological father and that power dynamics among the three main characters play a significant role.

One of the stronger responses to this question directly addresses the issue of Ratnam's illegitimacy, with the candidate highlighting Muniandy's declaration that 'out of blood that is not mine, he is mine.' This statement indicates that Muniandy considers himself Ratnam's father despite the many 'rough patches' in their relationship.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH (920/2)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

In Semester 2, 65 candidates sat for the examination of this subject and 84.61% of them obtained a full pass.

The percentage of each grade is as follows:

Grade	A	A–	B+	B	B–	C+	C	C–	D+	D	F
Percentage	13.85	7.69	9.23	24.62	15.38	7.69	6.15	6.15	6.15	1.54	1.54

PAPER 920/2 (*PLAYS*)

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

General Comments

This paper is based on two plays, namely Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" and Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun." Each play contributes two questions, for a total of four questions in three sections. Section A: Critical Appreciation provides candidates with the choice of answering a question based on either "Twelfth Night" or "A Raisin in the Sun." Sections B (Twelfth Night) and C (A Raisin in the Sun) do not offer options, and candidates must answer the provided question.

Regarding the quality of answers in this paper, candidates generally performed better in the close analysis questions in Section A compared to the essay questions in Sections B and C. There was a range of marks, indicating that the examination effectively distinguished between weaker and more able candidates. In general, the answer scripts varied from well-written to average, with only a small minority of weak answers. Additionally, the majority of candidates managed to provide answers to the three required questions within the allocated time. However, some candidates seemed to have struggled to complete all three questions, resulting in unsatisfactory or incomplete answers for Section B and/or C questions.

Most candidates structured their essays to include an introductory paragraph, with the majority also incorporating some form of a thesis statement, body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Strong candidates provided three or four well-developed points along with relevant textual evidence. However, average and weaker candidates could only offer one or two arguments, resulting in superficial answers with disjointed arguments. Some candidates also struggled to effectively incorporate excerpts into their answers for Section A. Answers from average and weak candidates showed a lack of critical analysis of the text. Many candidates, especially those unsure of what the question required (e.g., Question 4), resorted to general plot summaries or discussions of the main themes of the play, hoping that examiners would find something relevant and award marks.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION A: Critical Appreciation

Question 1

The question requires candidates to identify the physical features of the "lad" from the provided excerpt and then discuss how it highlights gender uncertainty/ambiguity.

Many students successfully identified the young "lad's" three feminine anatomical features mentioned in the excerpt by the duke. However, only the strong candidates were able to strengthen their argument by linking it to the second part of the question. These candidates explained how the passage demonstrated gender

uncertainty/ambiguity, where the duke was describing an attractive boy who was actually a young woman cross-dressing as a boy.

Furthermore, the Duke's ironic description revealed that the lad's sex appeal combined masculine and feminine characteristics. For example, comparing the boy's "smooth and rubious" lips to the goddess Diana's lips. The duke believed Olivia would feel comfortable opening up to Cesario because "he doesn't seem much like a man; he has feminine features and a sympathetic demeanour that will help her open up and confide in him as if she were talking to another woman, not feeling threatened."

Weaker candidates could not satisfactorily deconstruct and analyse the excerpt to demonstrate gender ambiguity. They focused on descriptive summaries or superficial readings of the excerpt and did not provide examples from the text to support their arguments.

Question 2

The question requires candidates to identify and track the changes in emotional responses that Ruth and Travis experience during their interaction.

Most students successfully identified and tracked the different emotional responses that Ruth and Travis felt during their interaction. The stage directions provided clues to the characters' actions and emotions, which strong candidates effectively incorporated into their answers. Some strong candidates also identified the underlying conflict between the two characters related to money.

Average and weaker candidates spent more time describing the dialogue instead of analysing what happened to explain the characters' emotions. They described the range of emotions experienced by Travis and then focused on Ruth's emotions. This approach weakened their arguments because they described actions instead of analysing the emotional interplay between the characters.

SECTION B: William Shakespeare: Twelfth Night

Question 3

For question 3, candidates are required to discuss the important role of music in "Twelfth Night."

In general, music and songs in Shakespearean plays serve various functions, including conveying plot, foreshadowing events, establishing setting, underscoring mood, highlighting character, and revealing major themes. In "Twelfth Night," music and songs are primarily used to convey the characters' feelings, create and sustain mood, and allude to the play's main themes, such as love.

Strong candidates for this question were able to identify the relevant roles/functions of music and songs in "Twelfth Night." They explained how music conveyed or reflected the characters' feelings, created and sustained mood, and added depth to the theme of love. These candidates provided suitable examples to support their points.

However, many average and weak candidates relied on memorised information from online study guides and regurgitated it without adapting it to the question's specific requirements. As a result, they produced disorganised essays that lacked a coherent argument. Some candidates resorted to cursory discussions of the play's main themes.

SECTION C: Lorraine Hansberry: A Raisin in the Sun

Question 4

For question 4, candidates are required to explain the close links between the love and care Mama showers on her plant and the love and care she showers on her family.

The key to excelling in this question is to focus on Mama's caring nature and understand the meaning of "affection" as a gentle feeling of liking and caring for someone or something. Candidates should establish clear connections between Mama's care for her plant and her care for her family, providing examples of actions and decisions that demonstrate her caring nature.

Strong candidates correctly focused on Mama and emphasised her selflessness and nurturing character. They explained how Mama constantly reminded Walter of her desire to make her children happy and provide for them. Mama's nurturing personality was symbolised by her care for her wilting houseplant, which mirrored her family's lack of resources. Despite challenges, Mama cared for the plant unconditionally, just as she cared for her family. Strong candidates provided examples of Mama's actions and decisions that showed her caring nature.

Many average and weak candidates mistakenly focused on the symbolism of the plant in Mama's life but failed to make clear connections to her family. They often stopped at describing the plant's significance without linking it to Mama's actions or decisions. Some candidates did not grasp the concept of "affection" and missed the opportunity to discuss Mama's caring nature effectively.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH (920/3)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

In Semester 3 2022, 65 candidates sat for the examination of this subject and 79.99% of them obtained a full pass.

The percentage of each grade is as follows:

Grade	A	A–	B+	B	B–	C+	C	C–	D+	D	F
Percentage	26.15	9.23	6.15	10.77	9.23	7.69	10.77	10.77	1.54	3.08	4.62

PAPER 920/3 (*NOVELS*)

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

General Comments

This paper is based on selected novels prescribed in the syllabus: "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen and "The Joy Luck Club" by Amy Tan. There are a total of four questions divided into three sections. Section A: Critical Appreciation provides a candidate with the choice of answering a question based on the excerpts from the two novels. Sections B (Pride and Prejudice) and C (The Joy Luck Club) do not provide options, and candidates have to attempt the question set accordingly.

Most candidates demonstrated good structure with appropriate content choices. Their answers were clear and balanced, with evident signposting and relevant conclusions. The responses consistently addressed the question, with minor gaps and few errors of fact and interpretation. The presentation of answers was clear and comprehensive, indicating a good comprehension of the candidates.

However, for Question No. 4, which focused on the phrase "the strengths of Chinese culture" in "The Joy Luck Club," some candidates misunderstood the term "as depicted in the novel." They interpreted it as referring to the plot set in China and America, without delving into how the author depicted Chinese culture's strengths. Most candidates discussed the plot without adequately addressing the strengths of Chinese culture, and their discussions of the characters' roles in the text were sometimes weak and unclear.

Overall, most answers demonstrated knowledge and understanding but lacked a critical element, suggesting weak comprehension of the questions and the themes and issues in the texts. Some answers were shorter than required, and there was evidence of an inability to address the tasks required by the questions related to the themes and issues of the texts, often lacking textual evidence.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION A: Critical Appreciation

Question 1

Candidates were required to find evidence in the excerpt to describe Mr. Collins' marriage proposal to Elizabeth and highlight the tension between them. They should have used Austen's diction, such as "cried," "hasty," and "you puzzle me exceedingly," to showcase Elizabeth's vexation. They were also expected to discuss Elizabeth's response to Mr. Collins' firm belief that she would accept his proposal, Mr. Collins' slow understanding of her refusal, and Elizabeth's willingness to lose her home rather than accept Mr. Collins' proposal.

In general, candidates who chose this question provided extensive, relevant, and adequate content. They demonstrated their knowledge and understanding well, although there were some errors of fact or interpretation when they did not provide textual evidence from the excerpt. Many candidates could provide appropriate examples from the excerpt, although the scope might have been limited. Some candidates engaged in critical analysis. However, some candidates failed to discuss the tension between Elizabeth and Mr. Collins and focused instead on summarising the proposal. A few candidates made references outside the excerpt before the proposal.

Question 2

Candidates were required to find evidence in the excerpt to support their discussion of how everyone can have equal, similar freedom. They should have highlighted the mother's encouragement of her daughter to be positive about the future. They were also expected to explain how America is a culturally diverse country, focusing on equal opportunities for all regardless of ethnicities and the allure of the American Dream.

Most answers were derivative, with candidates summarising the plot of the story related to America's role. Few candidates attempted to interpret the novel critically or evaluatively. Their arguments were often muddled or irrelevant, and most responses remained at the level of simple description. Some answers were appropriately comprehensive, relevant to the question, and clearly presented, with few errors of fact or interpretation.

SECTION B: Pride and Prejudice

Question 3

For this question, candidates were expected to discuss how Austen's depictions of the selected characters demonstrate her critique of 19th-century class structures, especially the link between divisions, prejudices, wealth, and family connections. They should have used examples from the text, such as Elizabeth and Darcy, to illustrate the distinction between internal worth and external circumstances. Candidates could also have discussed minor characters, such as Miss Bingley and Lady Catherine, as foils to highlight these traits in the two protagonists.

Generally, the question required candidates to provide answers pertaining to any two characters, understood to be Elizabeth and Darcy. However, some candidates discussed Elizabeth and Jane, while others discussed Mr. Bingley and Jane. They also demonstrated the ability to comment effectively on the statement, linking it to their two selected characters and providing answers appropriate to the question. These responses were not derivative and clearly reflected the candidates' understanding. Relevant examples from the text were used, and they were directly related to the question.

SECTION C: The Joy Luck Club

Question 4

For this question, candidates were expected to show how the strengths of Chinese culture are mainly depicted through the strong female characters, especially the mothers. They should have elaborated with other examples from the novel, such as the strong community spirit, neighbourliness, the strong familial bond, strong cultural traditions, strong survival spirit, unbroken ties with the past in China, and a strong sense of cultural identity.

The answers indicated that some candidates had a limited understanding of the term "strengths" in the question and its relevance in the text. Some even misspelled the word as "strenghts." Textual evidence, when provided, was often inappropriate and irrelevant to the question. Most candidates simply retold various aspects of Chinese culture in the novel, with some repeating the plot's depiction by the author. Few candidates effectively addressed the strengths of Chinese culture, and many responses did not contain textual evidence.

Overall, almost all answers did not meet the expected standard for the STPM level, showing errors in knowledge, a lack of understanding of the question, an absence of critical evaluation, and an inability to apply the literary element described, namely the depiction of the strengths of Chinese culture in the novel.