

## Paper 4 - Part II: Texts, 30 marks, 1h15

Candidates prepare one literary text for this part - there is a choice between a commentary and two essay questions.

Candidates choose one question and write a response in English (**450 to 600 words**).

The commentary invites **detailed analysis** and **appreciation of the extract's significance and form and its function within the work as a whole**.

This part of the examination promotes **literary appreciation** through detailed textual analysis.

### What is a commentary?

- First and foremost, a literary commentary is NOT an essay. The passage in front of you is not, therefore, an invitation to write a general essay about the work from which it has been taken.
- A commentary is an analysis of the given passage, its function and its characteristics. It should examine the key themes and stylistic devices of the passage, showing how the language works to convey (or at times undermine) its content.
- A commentary should relate the passage to the rest of the work (novel, collection of poems, etc.), but remain focused in the main on the details of the passage itself.
- Make sure that your commentary covers the whole passage. You should try to say something about each part.
- Use line numbers in your commentary, rather than wasting time by quoting at length.
- When you do quote, make sure that your comments don't simply repeat what the quotation already says: 'In the line "Il pleut dehors", the poet tells us that it is raining outside ...'
- Avoid verbosity or inaccurate terminology. Clarity and precision are top priorities.
- Don't use words like 'effective', 'atmospheric', or 'beautiful' unless you are also explaining what the effect, atmosphere or beauty of the passage are, and how they are achieved.

### 1 Introduction

- Put the passage into **context** (at what point in the novel the passage occurs, what precedes it, and/or follows it) and summarise its arguments briefly (in a few sentences): do not spend too much time discussing matters outside of the passage.
- You should assume that your reader has read the work from which the passage has been taken.
- You may want to point out the passage's **most important thematic and structural aspects** in your introduction.

## 2 Overview

- Introduce the main themes and structural aspects of the passage.
- What **kind** of passage is it (description/dialogue/free indirect speech), and what is its **function** (in the rest of the work)?
- What is its **overall structure** (repetitious/circular/leitmotifs/develops to a climax)?
- What is the **narrative point of view** (first-person/third-person/omniscient or not)?
- What are the **register** (high/low) and **tone** (comic/surreal) of the passage?

## 3 Detailed Analysis

This is the most substantial part of the commentary. It should not be simple description or paraphrase, but an analysis of how the language of the passage functions. The following are aspects of the text that you should look for:

- Sentence structure
- Tense usage
- Word order (balance or lack thereof, harmony, repetition, parallels)
- Figurative language (imagery, metaphors, similes, symbolism, allegory, personification, myth, antithesis, irony, paradox)
- Characterisation (or lack thereof)
- Narrative technique/point of view (first/third person, limited point of view, stream of consciousness)
- Punctuation
- Vocabulary
- Alliteration, assonance, rhyme (poetry and prose)

Remember that no text is likely to have instances of all of these elements, and that it is best to concentrate on those that are most relevant to the passage in question. Also, you should avoid simply commenting on the appearance of a particular technique: make sure you say why this is worth noticing, and explain how the various linguistic devices combine to produce the overall effect intended by the author.

## 4 Conclusion

- Summarise your findings, drawing together the different aspects of the text that you have discussed in your commentary.
- Assess briefly the achievements and significance of the passage, both in itself and in relation to the work from which it is taken.

Source:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/intranet/undergraduate/skills/commesswriting/commentarywriting/>